THREE SONS AND A MOTHER

GILBERT CANNAN

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THREE SONS AND A MOTHER

BY

GILBERT CANNAN

AUTHOR OF "OLD MOLE," "ROUND THE CORNER," ETC., ETC.

I saw a dead man in a fight
and I think that man was I

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TO MY BROTHER

J. F. C.

The shadow-play of which this tale is made
  Is also yours. It moved before your mind
And mingled with the visible and stayed
  Explanatory, mystic, there behind
All knowledge, always, powerful, a pit
  Of ghosts from whom our being springs. They dwelt
Where you and I were born. Their lives are knit
  With yours and mine, and what they did and felt
Dictates what you and I must feel and do
  In our own shadow-play through which we move,
Hardly less ghosts than they. If they were true
  We have our life and love that truth to prove.

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	The Foundations of a Family	11
II.	Childhood Days	15
III.	The Wide, Wide World	25
IV.	The Peter Leslies	33
V.	Suffering	46
VI.	Words	57
VII.	Affairs	65
VIII.	Tibby M'Phail	76
IX.	The Descent upon Thrigsby	87
X.	Making Plans	96
XI.	A Letter from Edinburgh	105
XII.	John Astonishes the Family	110
XIII.	Clibran Hall	123
XIV.	Greig and Allison-Greig	132
XV.	Margaret Dissatisfied	144
XVI.	Cateaton's Bank	155
XVII.	Selina Leslie	170
XVIII.	John's Wedding	185
XIX.	Agnes of the Lake	196
XX.	Hubert as Devil's Advocate	210
XXI.	Andrew's Will	224
XXII.	A Letter from Berlin	249

CHAPTER		PAGE
XXIII.	The Empty House	255
XXIV.	Fanny Shaw	271
XXV.	Tom and Agnes	279
XXVI.	The Struggle with Vanity	289
XXVII.	Ambition	299
XXVIII.	Tom's Marriage	308
XXIX.	News from John	326
XXX.	Morley Street Transfigured	341
XXXI.	Sancho Wilcox	358
XXXII.	Mrs. Leslie in Distress	372
XXXIII.	Acomb to the Rescue	385
XXXIV.	John's Return	414
XXXV.	A Letter from Rome	431
XXXVI.	Mrs. Elias Broadbent	436
XXXVII.	Catherine	451
XXXVIII.	Mr. Joseph Moon and the Succession	470
XXXIX.	Bell, Lawrie & Co.	488
XL.	Disaster	503
XLI.	A Letter from London	524
XLII.	Margaret Gathers Her Family Round Her	532

THREE SONS AND A MOTHER

CHAPTER I

THE FOUNDATIONS OF A FAMILY

THE history of a family commences at the point where it begins to be ashamed of its origin. The Lawries therefore look no farther back than Margaret Keith, the laird's daughter who married the pale, large-eyed minister, Thomas Nicol Lawrie, son of a butcher, but A.M. of Edinburgh. When he died she brought up his five children on ninety pounds a year. She need not have done this, for her brothers were thriving men, but as they had never forgotten the butcher behind Thomas' degree they were unable to offer help without condescension. Neither without condescension could Margaret accept so much as good-day from man, woman or child. As minister's wife she had ruled firmly in the wide parish and had clothed herself in a dignity of which she was not going to allow the death of her husband to strip her.

She had a grim struggle with Death, fought so strenuously and with so fierce a spirit that the gentle Thomas, who had no intention of dying, could not bear up against it, saw his condition as he had seen so much else, through

her eyes, and gave up his soul with the sweet smile which had been almost his only gift and more than any other quality had brought him out of the slaying of animals into the cure of souls. At first Margaret took his smile for a sign that she was winning, but almost at once she knew that, as always at crucial moments, he was evading her, going over in his heart to the side of her adversary, going, moreover, maddeningly, out of amiability and what she called "that foolish weakness of yours, Tom." Also, when he smiled like that, she never could resist giving him what he wanted, and now as he smiled she could not resist, and, desiring death, he was taken. She watched the smile die out of his face as it turned to a mask of a spiritual beauty and strength that shocked and offended his wife, so little had she suspected it in his life. Yet she could not but realise it: there was the shock of truth upon her mind, and as a widow she was vowed to him as she never had been as a wife, and with all the obstinacy of her nature, she was more firmly in revolt against the vulgarity of the butcher and the shop. She cut them right out of her life and, now that he was dead, set the Rev. T. Lawrie, A.M., above all the Keiths with their lands, and their ancestors, knights and courtiers though some of them had been. And when the Keiths condescended to the children of the Rev. T. Lawrie she routed them, applied to the Widows' Pension Fund, put on her jack boots and rode into the nearest town where there was a good academy. There she took a wee house, gasping at the thought of the rent before she knew whether she was going to have an income or no.

However, there came the assurance that she would have ninety pounds a year and she vacated the manse without telling her brother or anyone in the parish except Doctor M'Phail, who in the kindness of his heart made her an

offer of forty pounds a year if she would take charge of a natural child of his, a girl of seven, and bring her up with her own family. The offer was rejected without indignation, but Margaret promised that she would, as far as possible, keep an eye on the child, who, otherwise, would be left to the mercies of her mother, a feckless trollop though a beauty. The Doctor had been the best friend of the minister and his talk had been the widow's greatest comfort:

"We'll not have another minister like him. Strong at the praying, he was, without being terrible. His preaching could turn the whole congregation of wicked sinners like myself into little children. Aye, he was a poet, and had he lived we should have had a new paraphrase of the Psalms. When I look at his sons I wonder if any of 'em will beat him, will there be one that has the gift was in him, though he but half knew it himself. There's Tom the spit of yourself, and John's a flesher blood and bone. I would say Jamie had most of his father's sweetness but for the awful rages he will get into. A good lad that, but there's his mark on every one of his brothers and sisters as you know."

Until her widowhood Margaret had taken her children in the lump, Jamie, Tom, John, Margaret and Mary, as good Keiths. As she watched them now, she decided that the two girls were Keiths, Jamie with his terrible temper unaccountable, and Tom pure Lawrie in spirit, with John mere Lawrie in flesh. In feature Tom was the most like his father, but he had his mother's expression, who therefore, loved him with more than maternal love. It was Tom who would be the good boy to uphold the family, Tom who would win the fame denied his father by his early death, Tom whose destiny his brothers and sisters

must serve if they and the world were to meet on good terms.

There was something of revenge in Margaret's spirit. If the world would only allow her ninety pounds a year with which to prepare her children to make a figure in it, it must not in the future complain if when the time came they demanded their due to the uttermost farthing. England was a rich country. There were Keiths in England getting riches out of her and making themselves fine men, and there were poor lads from St. John's Town and Motherwell who had gone over into England and were richer even than any of the Keiths. The Macleans had already a Baronet in the family and his son a clerk in the House of Lords.

Margaret was a passionate widow. She hated being one of many widows receiving charity and she used to say to Tom:

"We'll pay them back, won't we, Tommy? Ten years at most will be nine hundred pounds. We'll pay that back easy when we're rich and you're a fine man."

And Tom used to say:

"It's Jamie'll be the grand man. He's the one at the academy, except in the arithmetic, where he's a born fool. I can beat him at the arithmetic and John would if he weren't a lazy gowk. Besides Jamie'll be the first to go."

CHAPTER II

CHILDHOOD DAYS

THE wee house in which the Lawries were brought up was in a small grey town on the sea looking over to the hills of Cumberland. These were their Blue Mountains beyond which lay adventure and five kingdoms each waiting for its prince or princess. Four kingdoms and a half would be more accurate, for, when John thought of his, he decided that he would have to sell half of it in order to have some money by him. He had already begun to put by his bawbees, whereas Tom used to lend his upon interest to Jamie, who would squander all he laid hands on in buying fishing tackle or kites—he was a great one for kite-flying—or goodies and ribbons for the lassies, his sisters and others. He crippled himself for weeks once in order to buy his sister Mary, the only student of the family, a copy of Lemprière's *Classical Dictionary* in which to verify her references in the verses she was always writing, though he would tease her over her productions until she wept. His unkindness, however, was forgotten in his generosity and she was more devoted to him than he knew and often saved him from the consequences of his escapades both at home and at the academy. She would help him with his arithmetic and got him to teach her Greek, as he learned it, for as a girl she was precluded from that study. As a result Greek was

the only subject to which he applied himself, for all the others he took easily and brilliantly, digesting just enough to satisfy or to hoodwink the dominie. The only two prizes he ever got were for Greek and for Latin verses, and both these with performances so excellent that the dominie, lifted by enthusiasm above routine, had visions of an education leading even unto Parnassus, or, failing that, a Professor's chair. He called on Margaret and praised Jamie to the skies, not only as a scholar, but also as a moral influence.

"It is fine," he said, "how they look up to him. It is the dream of every schoolmaster to have a boy like that pass through his hands, to have at least one name rising above the crowd of ministers and farmers and clerks that constitute his enormous and dour family."

"Aye," said Margaret, "you'll hear of my sons."

"The lad should go to Edinburgh, not only for the learning, but for his character, to be among great men, in a city where he can see any day illustrious men shedding their lustre upon the streets."

"I've good promises for my sons," replied Margaret. "They're to go among the English."

"That's a pity," said the dominie.

"Pity? My brothers and cousins are there. It is a great rich country."

"It is a country without character if history goes for anything, though I'll not deny they have great universities."

"There'll be no university where my sons are going, except the university of life."

"There are some characters need stiffening for that."

"Would you send my son Tom to the university?"

"I would not. He's a good lad, Tom, but no scholar."

"He has twice the sense of his brother."

"I'm not denying that. Sense isn't everything."

"It has been to me." Margaret was growing impatient with the melancholy man's insistence on a project which she had no intention of considering. "It has been to me. Where would I be without it?"

"Well, I'll give Jamie his due. He'll find his own way out."

"Aye," replied Margaret, "and Tom will find a way out for all of us."

That in effect was Margaret's programme for Tom. She could take charge of him as she never could of Jamie, who had adopted a position separate from and annoyingly above the family. There was no assertiveness about him. He maintained his position rather by absence of opinions than by any expression of them. Obedient and considerate to his mother, he had, she felt, enormous reservations in his acceptance of her authority. He eluded her, not as his father had done with a touching and inspiring smile, but with a nervous blankness that was almost defiance. In this he was entirely without support. Even Mary was secret in the allegiance she owed him and was openly against him in the periods of disgrace to which he was by general consent damned after his "rages."

These had been frequent in him when he was a child, nearly always inexplicable, coming with hardly a sign of a storm, tearing out of him in his exasperation at some stupidity in Tom, some slyness in John, or some slavishness in his sisters. Only once did he turn on his mother.

He was working in the kitchen, writing an essay for a prize (which he did not win). His mother was cooking at the same table and, being rather happy, made a clatter with her spoons and dumped down her pastry-board with a careless slam. He did not mind that, but when she assumed a kindly voice and said: "There'll be pastry bits

to-night, Jamie," he growled out: "I'd liefer you'd give them to the pigs."—"Pigs, indeed!"—"Ay, they're better than we are wi' our damned pride. Aye, I'd liefer be one in a sow's litter than what I am." He said this in a thin furious voice that showed all the blistering heat that was in him.

Margaret stared at him, took up a spoon, put it down and took it up again.

"Leave the room," she said.

Jamie took up his essay and tore it across and across, crumpled the pieces up and thrust them into his trousers pocket. Then with a sob he plunged out of the room, bewildered, angry, blind with shame, shaken with a despairing mortification at his inability to understand what it was in himself that could so break down his control and mock his natural desire for affection, peace, good-humour. He did not even know what he had said—something about pigs—so complete was the possession under which he laboured. The pain in his mother's face was clear enough, but not less clear than the anger and the injured pride and outraged authority, things which that power in him must deny. It was not enough to avoid them. That was somehow mean and revolting to him. Not to give her pain would have been sweet to him if there could have been any other means of escaping it. There was none. The wrath had to be evaded or faced and he could not but do the last.

He was fifteen when he was guilty of this explosion and his mother chose to punish him by sewing up his trousers pockets, saying as she did so that it would keep his hands out of them and prevent him slouching. Also, she refused to speak to him and addressed herself to him when necessary through his brothers. He kept his mouth shut for a whole fortnight and avoided the house as much

as possible. At first it was some comfort to him that his disgrace threw a shadow over the whole household, but his brothers and sisters quickly recovered and he was left to grizzle over the problem of his inability to be as happy as they. What brought him the greatest suffering was that he could not remember what he had said; not the words, hardly the sense, though the feeling was plain enough: only too plainly evil. Only the evil, the sins denounced in the kirk by the minister had a terrifying effect on him; they were disgusting in their cold malignancy. This thing was all of whirling fire and magnificently strong, bearing the weight of his ordinarily despondent personality as easily as a feather. But it was unrecognised and ignored: only its strange effect upon himself was seen and regarded as a nuisance, so that he was denied the affection for which he hungered.

Only Mary was unable to bear his silence and to leave it to him to break it. She was worried because he was getting into trouble at the academy, for leaving his tasks undone. One night she followed him up to the room he shared with Tom and found him glaring out of the window into the neighbour's garden. She sat on the bed and opened the *Anabasis* of Xenophon on which he should have been working and started to construe the sixteen lines he had to do for the morning, and to write down the words, Greek and English, alternately.

"What are you doing, wee Mary?"

"I'm doing our Greek, Jamie."

"To hell wi' the Greek," he said. "I'll soon be finished wi' the academy and all that. A wish I could be a man all at once, I do."

"For why?"

"I'd understand a thing or two, then, maybe. Ech! I hate them creeping into your body inch by inch, I do."

"Is there wunnerful thoughts in your head, Jamie?"

"Never a one."

"Never a one? Better the Greek than nothing."

Jamie flung himself on the bed, and together they plodded through the page of the wisdom of Socrates. It was hard for the boy to keep his attention fixed. Suddenly he sat up and said:

"I'd feel better, wee Mary, if I didna think Tom sic a terrible fule."

"Tom! Ye mustn't judge."

"I dinna judge, I know."

With that he began to whistle. Then he laughed.

"We're all planned for, to be put out, me in the Keith mills to keep a place warm for Tom. You're to go out to the Edinburgh Keiths, that's Mrs. Forshaw, to be a governess and to make footprints for Margaret to step in. I've been thinking of Napoleon and wondering what he would do in the like circumstances. He wasn't so unlike me, with a wonderful mother and all."

"The idea! Napoleon!"

"Not so like neither. I would hate to be a soldier. I'd rather die."

"D'you think you'll remember the Greek to-morrow?"

"I'll make a show. You're a good little maggot, wee Mary, and I'll read your poems to-night, and I'll go down and tell my mother I'm a beast and a pollution of the air she and her children breathe." He drew in his breath, for he had just remembered what he had said to her. "By gorm!" he cried. "What a——!"

"What is it?" asked Mary.

"The things in my head'll no fit into yours."

With that he went down into the kitchen and apologised to his mother, who told him she was proud of him and bade him never forget that he was a Keith as well as a

Lawrie, and, to boot, a minister's son. These were then three good reasons why it behoved him not to be as other men.

Margaret had been and still was rather frightened and was talking her way back to assurance. Jamie was much too fearful of her to conceive that such could be her case and she seemed to him only to be taking an unfair advantage of his apology. He was filled with resentment and disliked being told not to be as other men when there were so many whom he could admire and wish to love.—Doctor M'Phail, Ben Lamont, the minister's son, who was at Oxford University, the Customs officer and Farquharson, the tailor, and his Uncle Shiel, who was a farmer in the Glen Kens and with his open house gave his nephews and nieces a happiness to which they could turn from the ambitious future that, whether they liked it or not, awaited them. As a matter of fact they never considered whether they liked it. They were taught that they must rise above ninety pounds a year—charity at that—and their superiority to the people who lived in houses similar to their own was, outside their assumption of it, real enough to make their soaring future axiomatic. The success of Jamie and Mary in book-learning was fortified by the physical prowess of Tom and John, who, though they fought like terriers with each other, were instantly combined against any onslaught upon either. As for Margaret, she was a beautiful child, and everybody loved her and thought her much too good for this earth, an opinion which she accepted as gracefully as she did everything and with a deprecating indifference which gave her for all but John, who hated her, a potent charm.

Altogether they were a happy family in a place and a country where happiness was never too common. Their living was hard and their food was plain and they were

given to understand that though their future would be splendid it would certainly not be easy. Margaret was shrewd enough and very skilful at imbuing her children with a proper spirit. She did not interfere overmuch with their quarrels among themselves but only when their conduct was in any detail unworthy of the family, of a father who was surely an angel, of a mother who, in spite of all obstacles, had kept the home together, and by force of character had turned disadvantage to advantage. Tom particularly was often regaled with stories of the men from the countryside who, without birth and with small education, had gone to the mills of Lanarkshire or Lancashire, "got on" and become fine men.

"Oh aye," Tom used to say, "I'll get on."

"And you'll not forget your brothers and sisters."

"I'll not forget my mother."

Then Margaret would embrace him and tell him she was sure he would never do that.

So intent was she on preparing her sons for success that she lost sight of their moral education and assumed that, as sons of a minister, their religion must be satisfactory. The Sabbath was observed rigidly in her house. The blinds were down all day and no book was allowed to be read but the Bible, and here again Jamie got into trouble, for he was found to have torn the pages out of his Bible and substituted those of *The Faerie Queene.* When he was asked why he had done this thing he said:

"I prefer't."

But his treasure was confiscated and burned for an abortion, an unholy book in holy covers.

For a few Sundays after that trouble Margaret made her eldest son, for his good, read aloud to her from the Bible, but he would read nothing but the genealogical tables, saying that *begat* was a good word and would

make a fine oath. Here he discovered his mother's one weakness towards him. His comical, solemn way of saying absurdities appealed to her sense of humour and when he spoke to her then she could never keep up her stern front. But because he made her laugh she distrusted him only the more and would write long letters about him to Doctor M'Phail or her cousin, Shiel. The Doctor had Jamie to stay with him a few months before he was to go on his adventure into the world, observed the boy carefully, drew him out, stirred up his pride by laughing at him, came to his own conclusions and wrote to Margaret:

"The boy has no danger but his own innards. I've warned him and recommended Turkey rhubarb. He was interested and asked questions about himself. He's been at my books too, the rogue. I've done for him what I imagine his own blessed father would have done and now we must throw him out to sink or swim."

The Doctor gave Jamie a copy of Burns's *Poems* and a golden sovereign with King William's head on it. When he got home he gave it to Tom; who, with help from John, produced seventeen shillings in silver for it, recouping himself for a long outstanding loan, with interest, of two shillings and sixpence. Four shillings were spent on a feast in honour of the departure for the foundations of the family fortune, three were given to Mary towards a set of the Waverley Novels which she coveted, and the rest disappeared in the purchase of knives and goodies and fishing hooks for school friends. To disguise this reckless expenditure, ten shillings had to be borrowed from Tom on a promise to repay out of the first month's salary.

Mary packed her brother's wooden chest for him and moistened his shirts with her tears. Margaret painted him a text, "The Greatest of These is Charity," and Tom and John bought him a walking-stick. Farquharson the tailor had made him what he called an English suit, and for the first time in his life he wore a collar of the type made popular by Lord Byron, the martyr to liberty, who had died on Mary's brithday, at Missolonghi.

The whole family walked out to the carrier's to say farewell and Jamie alarmed them all and disgusted Tom by bursting into tears. He was thinking that he might not see them or the country he had loved to roam in for years, and when the carrier drove off and his kinsfolk were soon out of sight he was sick with a feeling of loneliness and enraged by his inability to imagine what he was going towards. He yearned after his mother and ached to be with her and to stay by her side, to repair the loneliness from which she too, in his imagination, had suffered. But he was soon seized with a natural young curiosity, watching the horses, the driver, the other occupants of the cart, the hills diminishing as they were approached, feeling for the whiskers which he hoped were appearing on his cheeks, and every ten minutes pulling out of his fob the new watch sent to him by his Uncle Shiel.

CHAPTER III

THE WIDE, WIDE WORLD

IT is time to give my readers a hint as to the period through which they are to follow the establishment of the illustrious family, over whose members they have the advantage of knowing the history of the time. Such an advantage is unfair and if they are to understand James and his kinsfolk they must forget it and remember only that Queen Victoria had lately ascended the throne, that ships had recently crossed the Atlantic under steam and that, though Napoleon Bonaparte was long since dead, yet he was in the imaginations of all men the most lively figure, the arrivist who had arrived, but, being only a Frenchman, he had had to depart. Had he been an Englishman, *à la bonne heure!* It was annoying to have a chit of a girl on the throne, but Englishmen could always smile at Fate and show themselves gentlemen. As for the Scots, being romantic, and, thanks to John Knox, educated, they could beat the English at their own game, because they could regard it as a means and not as an end. They were charged with destiny, the service of the clan, and a shining name was of more worth to them than riches, though these were necessary for security's sake, a guarantee that their light would not be hid.

It was almost a tradition in the Keith family, for instance, that the English were soft and slow, a blind race,

tripping their way along, and needing a dog to guide them. James Lawrie's head was full of this tradition on his long, uncomfortable journey by sea and land. He was very sick on the water and very cold on the land, for it was early spring and dirty weather and he took his first railway journey over the thirty miles from the coast to Thrigsby without marvelling at it. The smell of the engine on the Glasgow packet-boat had given him a fierce hatred of machinery driven by steam, and the discomfort of the open truck called a third-class carriage made him incapable of anything but a longing for his journey's end. When at last he reached it and was turned out with his chest he sat on it shivering, with his mind a blank, so utterly was he disappointed by the aspect of the city in which he was to seek his fortune. It was so black, so huddled, so ungenial, with its tall chimneys and slate roofs, dank and wet under the rain. It looked mean and poverty-stricken, disordered and uncared for. And there was not a soul in the station to speak to him or even to notice him. Also for many hours he had had nothing to eat: his stomach was protesting and he hardly cared what became of him.

He tried once to accost a stranger in his best English but it was not understood, nor could he make anything of the stranger's speech. Then he was overcome with shyness and could attempt no more. For half-an-hour he sat on his chest, deciding that he would leave it there and walk home or run away to a war.

At last he was greeted by a woman who said he was a likely lad and had a lucky face, in itself a gift sufficient to put heart into a creature. Doctor M'Phail had warned him against women and he was filled with dread. However, there was so much kindness in her face and she was so persistent in her attentions that at last he loosened

his tongue and told her he was a Scotsman come to be placed in the world with his kinsman, Andrew Keith.

"Andrew Keith, is it?" said she. "Well I never! Why Andrew Keith lives just round the corner from me."

At this point she was joined by a little undersized man with enormous shoulders and a birth-mark over one eye.

"Eh! Mike," she said, "isn't that lucky. Here's Andrew Keith's own nevvy come to Thrigsby and no one to meet him. You can carry his chest home and him and me'll go off and have summat t'eat and join you later."

She took Jamie by the arm and led him slowly out of the station, he looking back for his chest, and not daring to protest in his anxiety not to make a fool of himself in his first encounter with the great world of England. Mike had hoisted the chest onto his broad shoulders and came lurching and staggering after them. The woman talked all the time.

"We've heard tell you was coming," she said. "There's always a deal o' talk about Andrew Keith and his doings. The good-looking Keiths they're called in Thrigsby, and it was said that the best favoured of 'em all was coming."

Mike had caught them up, passed them and disappeared at a run round the corner. Realising that he had made a fool of himself, Jamie started to run after him, but when he turned the corner there was no sight of the man; neither, on retracing his steps, could he discover trace of the woman. He went cold with shame and dread of the confession he would have to make to his uncle. It was growing dusk and he determined to make his way to Clibran Hall, where presumably he was expected, to pretend that he had lost his luggage on the railway and so bury the tale of his folly for ever.

Clibran Hall was a couple of miles out from the centre of the town, half-way to the weaving village of Clure,

which young Lawrie reached before he discovered he had passed the house he was seeking. When he asked at an inn how far he was from Andrew Keith's house, a man sitting in the bar parlour spat on the floor, raised his pint pot and threw its contents in the boy's face, growling out words in the unintelligible language of the place. However, the landlord of the inn bade the man behave himself and told Jamie he must go back two miles until he came to a great yellow house with a hornbeam by the gate. Jamie remembered the house but could not imagine that any relative of his could live in so huge a mansion. It was three times as big as Ardross, the home of the Keiths.

He had begun now to recover from his mortification at the loss of his chest, feeling quite sure that he would be able to carry it off with a lie, which he had enjoyed inventing down to the smallest detail. His arrival among the English had become more interesting to him and he was so filled with admiration for his lie as a lie that he thought of telling Andrew Keith the truth first and the lie afterwards, so that he too might appreciate and admire. His Uncle Shiel would certainly have done so, and he imagined Andrew Keith to be not unlike Uncle Shiel. Great was his disappointment then, when, on his admission to the great yellow house, he was taken in charge by a red-faced butler, who, on hearing his name, told him he was to wait.

"But I'm expected," said Jamie, smelling good roast mutton and getting very hungry. "Mr. Keith's my uncle, and I've come all the way from Scotland."

"Mr. Keith is at dinner and is not to be disturbed."

Jamie was turned into a little den of a library that reeked of stale tobacco smoke, and was crowded from floor to ceiling with books. On a table was a tray with glasses, a decanter of wine and a biscuit-box. Jamie took

down *Tom Jones* and was soon deep in it, sitting near the biscuits and nibbling at them until he realised to his dismay that he had eaten them all.—"No luck to-day," he thought and started out on another lie. It was not half ready when the door opened and Andrew Keith entered.

"Hum, ha!" he said, bringing his lips close together and blowing out his nostrils. "Hum, ha. Reading, are we?"

Jamie jumped to his feet and stood blushing and anxious. Andrew held out two fingers, which his nephew seized and shook roughly.

"Manners, manners. Stand up and let me have a look at you. Would we like a glass of Madeira wine after our journey? A glass of wine and a biscuit."

His face was still shining with the good dinner he had eaten. Jamie shook with rage as he said it and forgot his lie about the biscuits. His uncle looked into the box, guessed what had happened and clapped the lid on it again without a word. Then he poured out half-a-glass of Madeira and handed it to his nephew, sank back into a big horsehair chair, and, placing spectacles on his jutting nose, proceeded to inspection.

"A reg'lar Lawrie," he said. "Drink your wine, boy. You won't be able to afford wine this many a year. And now tell we what you want to do, how you left your good mother, what kind of a journey you had and what you saw by the way."

Andrew Keith had a large white face surrounded with a thin fringe of grey whisker, a long chin that sank deep into his chest as he looked up with his small keen eyes under their puckered lids. He wore a white silk tie filling in the aperture of his low-cut waistcoat, and seeming to the alarmed boy an extension of his face. Jamie stuttered out:

"I—I was very sick on the boat."

"Ah, hum. No steamboats when I made the journey; no railways; glad enough we were in those days of the Duke's Canal. Ah! It's all made easy for you youngsters. Though there's the same rules to be observed—fear God, honour the King and your parents and those set in authority over you, apply yourself to your duty, read little but wisely, and when you talk, keep all your words in reason. I—ah, hum—am going to give you a thorough trial, to see what stuff you are made of, for your mother's sake. You come on her side from an honourable and an ancient family. Keep that in your mind in all your dealings and do nothing which could injure its—ah—solid place in the world. You will begin, as I began, as every young man should begin, at the bottom. The success you meet will be the result of your own endeavours and my good will—when you have deserved it.—Now, what is your first duty?"

Jamie glanced nervously round the comfortable room. The Madeira wine warming up his little clamorous stomach had made him light-headed. He hazarded:

"To get rich." At once he knew that was wrong and replaced it with: "To be an honour to my family."

"Tut," said Andrew. "We'll be content if you're no disgrace. What has your schooling been?"

"I've a prize for Latin verses."

"Oh aye, it's good to be a scholar when you have your position, but not till then. A bit of the Latin is very powerful with these ignorant folk here. But that'll do. Ye've got me havering. Ye can go to your bed now and, when you say your prayers, thank God for it and think of the many would be glad of it."

He shifted his wine-glass from his right hand and held

out two fingers. Jamie remembered his chest, hesitated and trembled out his lie.

"A've lost ma kist."

"Your chest, lad?"

"Aye, wi' a new suit, and three sarks, and a pair of boots, some books, a box o' shortbread and a kite."

"Lost your chest?"

"Aye. It was the railway train."

Andrew brinked. "They screwed your head on for you before they cut your apron strings."

The taunt so enraged Jamie that he burst into tears and blurted out the truth how his chest had been stolen from him after he had brought it safely through all his long journey. His uncle became kinder then, rose from his chair, patted his shoulder and told him he would see the police in the morning. The bell was rung, the butler appeared, received instructions to find a nightshirt and led the unhappy James off to an enormous room, heavily curtained, where he had a huge four-poster bed. He shuffled out of his clothes and into his borrowed nightshirt and lay terrifying himself with the idea that the top of the four-poster was coming down slowly, slowly to suffocate him.

He felt very, very small in the soft feather mattress which billowed up on either side of him. The linen sheets were very cold to his body and he missed Tom, without whom he had not slept for years. . . . The world on the other side of the mountains was distressingly large, black, empty, indifferent; he had made all that uncomfortable, tedious journey to find a great, callous world full of thieves and big-faced uncles, who seemed not only indifferent to the great intention with which he had come among them, but even hostile to it. This indifference, this hostility made the world for him as big, as stuffy, as

ominous as the four-poster bed in which he lay. It was a cruel denial of all that he had imagined. Though he had chafed against the small life at home, yet there had been in it gems of liberty which were despoiled by Andrew Keith and his big face, his big yellow house, and his big four-poster. The Keiths of his mother's tales had been such wonders that there was nothing for the young Lawries to do but to emulate them, and Jamie, knowing that he must, felt on that first contact with them that he could not.

CHAPTER IV

THE PETER LESLIES

BREAKFAST was at seven, on the stroke, and this meal Jamie was permitted to share with his uncle. There were a pork-pie and beer for Andrew: porridge and milk for the boy: and honey in the comb for both. After a decent interval they set out for the counting-house behind Princess Street. It was a square, plain building, among other square, plain buildings, hard by a canal. The street was thronged with men and boys going to their work, and already there were drays and lorries clattering over the cobbles. Already out of some of the square buildings came the whir and thud of engines. The noise and the bustle awed and excited Jamie. He began to feel important, as though it was all because of himself and his uncle. The men on the pathway made room for them as they approached and some of them said, "Morning, sir." Then, watching his uncle, Jamie saw that he was taking no notice, but pursed up his lips and tucked down his head and walked a little quicker. So Jamie pursed up his lips and tucked down his head and walked a little quicker, fixing his eye on the brass plate which said Keith Bros. & Stevenson. Inside himself he cried: "That's me, James Keith Lawrie," and indeed, as he crossed the threshold, the building seemed to grow perceptibly smaller, only to swell out enormously at once, as

he realised that he did not know his way about in it. He shambled up behind his uncle and followed him through a roomful of young men (a horrible ordeal), along a passage and into a quiet, remote chamber with a huge desk, a thick Turkey carpet, a loud-ticking clock, a shelf of books, a portrait of the Duke of Bridgewater, a wooden model of a steam-engine, and a miniature bust of Arkwright. Here Andrew Keith seemed to be more sure of himself than in his big house; his manner changed; his face grew almost animated. He took out his watch and compared it with the big clock which he could see through the high grimy window. It wanted two minutes to nine. There were letters on the table. He fingered these, pleased to have so large a pile of them. At last he cleared his throat and addressed Jamie:

"This is where you will begin your career. Find your way about the office and the warehouse and then we will give you a spell at the mill. You will be given every opportunity to learn every side of the trade because you are my nephew, but while you are learning you must forget that you are my nephew."

"Yes," said Jamie.

"You may come to see me every other Sunday, but here in the office we shall only meet as employer and employee."

"Yes," said Jamie.

"Much will depend on your choice of friends and in that it would be well for you to remember who you are."

Jamie was suffering from a reaction and the only echo this saying found in him was the question: "Who am I?"

Andrew continued:

"It only remains to warn you against the temptations of a great city, but a young man with so good a mother as you have had should be able to resist them."

"Yes," said Jamie, rather pleasantly excited by the warning.

"Above all, keep clear of politics until you have an income and a vote to steady you."

A middle-aged man entered and wished Mr. Keith good-morning.

"My kinsman, James Lawrie," said Andrew.

The middle-aged man grunted:

"In my room, sir?"

"No. He is to begin with Leslie. Tell Leslie I wish to see him and come back yourself when he is gone."

The middle-aged man disappeared and was replaced by a thin, gloomy man who stood glowering down at his boots as Andrew presented his nephew.

"Leslie," he said, "has very kindly consented to take you into his house. My nephew, Leslie, has had the misfortune to lose his luggage on his journey here. You will kindly apply to the cashier for seven pounds ten to buy him the necessary clothes and boots."

"Yes," said the gloomy man, "my wife will see to it."

"I could do it myself," interjected Jamie, hating the idea of being handed over to a woman.

"Mr. Leslie will see to it," said Andrew severely. "It is time for you to begin your duties, but first could you describe the persons who robbed you of your chest?"

"The man," replied Jamie eagerly, vividly remembering, "was short and broad-shouldered, shabbily dressed, and he wore clogs. He had a big red mark over his right eye and the woman called him Mike. She was pleasant-looking, with bright eyes and full lips. She was short and had a very big bosom."

"That'll do," Andrew cut him short. "I'm sure Mr. Leslie will be a good friend to you."

Leslie led Jamie down a long passage and up a few

stairs into a bare room along all sides of which were desks and tall stools. At the end of this room was a little square window and next to it a desk, at which sat another boy who, as they approached, buried his nose in a great ledger lying open before him.

"Bell," said Leslie, "this is Lawrie. He will take over your work from to-morrow, when you are to go into Mr. Clulow's room. Show him what you have to do, and in the dinner hour you can take him over the warehouse."

Jamie and Bell eyed each other shyly. Bell grinned as Leslie turned away. Jamie took his grin for friendliness and warmed to him.

"Is it very difficult?"

"Combing your hair's a sight harder."

"Oh!"

"You'd better begin copying letters and if anybody comes to the window you can ask them what the hell they want and tell me."

So Jamie began by copying letters all very much alike about bales and freights and deliveries. These letters only interested him when they referred to payment and were offensive. Then he rather relished copying them, though he was always relieved when there came a tap at the window and he was told Wyman, McClure, or Tibbett's, or Clomen & Co. wished to be attended to. Then he referred to Bell and Bell referred to Mr. Wilcox, and Mr. Wilcox referred to Mr. Leslie, who said "Damn" and went out of the room. Though he was interested time went slowly and he often fell to watching Bell, who would stop in the middle of a sentence with his pen poised above the paper and stare vacantly in front of him and suck his teeth or hum to himself, or slowly scratch his head. Occasionally Mr. Wilcox would say in a dreamy, empty voice—"Mesopotamia, Mes-o-pot-

am-i-a," ringing the changes on the syllables until Mr. Leslie told him to dry up.

In the dinner hour when Jamie asked why Mr. Wilcox said "Mesopotamia," Bell told him that old Cocks-and-hens was a great reciter and often performed:—

"Penny readings, Waterloo and that. Makes ye fair laugh. I heard him once tell Mr. Leslie there was a man once could say Mesopotamia so as to make thousands of people cry."

Jamie tried it to himself and found that he could very nearly bring tears to his eyes, and he became interested in Mr. Wilcox: so much so that when Bell took him round the warehouse he said very little and came away with a confused memory of enormous piles of cloth with men lazily moving round them. He was rather shocked by the indolence and the quiet of it all, for his idea of the big city had been one of fierce energy. However his interest in Mr. Wilcox remedied his disappointment and when Bell took him out into the streets he shook off the sleepiness which had begun to overcome him, yet, not wishing to be taken for a new-comer, he strove as much as possible to conceal his interest and excitement. Bell showed him the new Queen's Theatre, the Town Hall, the Gentleman's Concert Hall, and the new station, but Jamie merely glanced at them and said: "Ou, aye," or, when he remembered that he was in England, "Oh! yes."

His clothes made him very unhappy. Farquharson had made his coat very short in the back and his trousers tight about his calves. He was glad, indeed, that he had lost his chest and would soon be in appearance as the others.

At the coffee-house where they dined he was introduced to a number of young men and youths, but he was afraid of them and kept his mouth shut. They all laughed a great deal and he understood none of their jokes.

The afternoon was like the morning, except that a traveller came in with tales of success and adventures on the road and an exciting account of riots in London. Mr. Wilcox said: "What we need is a great orator. These men don't know how to handle an audience. England is going to the dogs."—"Not," replied the traveller, "while trade grows the way it does."—"Trade!" sniffed Mr. Wilcox. "I know all about that. What's the good of it if it only leads to more trade?"—His scorn seemed very fine to Jamie, who had begun to be bored by the letters he was copying.

Work stopped early in the afternoon and conversation flowed freely: Mr. Leslie moving in and out of the room with his hands full of papers and ledgers. Other men came in and went out and when at last activity ceased Mr. Wilcox asked if he might recite *The Isles of Greece,* which he had prepared for that evening. Mr. Leslie grunted and Mr. Wilcox took up his stand by the fireplace, flung back his head and declaimed Byron's lyric. When he had finished he said: "By Heaven, that is as good as a taste of liberty, and I'm hanged if I wait for the clock to strike." With that he clapped his hat on his head, and strode magnificently from the room. Bell laughed and said: "You've hurt his feelings by not asking him to recite something else." He laughed again when Jamie replied: "I wish I had."

It was nearly dark when Mr. Leslie put on his hat and coat and tucked a ledger under his arm and asked Jamie to come with him. They walked through the streets for some miles without a word. Mr. Leslie went so fast with his loping steps that Jamie had to stride his hardest to keep up with him. At last the thin man said gloomily: "Mind children?"—"I have minded my sisters," replied Jamie.—"I mean, you don't object to them?"—"No."

The question surprised Jamie, to whom it had never happened to object coolly or on principle to anything. "No," he said. "No."

They came to a row of little houses that looked out over fields from which a mist was rising. "This is where I live," said Mr. Leslie. "Would you rather I lent you a nightgown or send you out to-night with Mrs. Leslie to buy your things?"

Jamie said he would rather borrow for that night and make his purchases the next day. The long silent walk had depressed him and also he was anxious not to cause his host any trouble. He had been feeling that he was not wanted, for he knew how in his own family the presence of a stranger would have been resented. Besides he was anxious to do the buying of his clothes himself so that he might be certain of getting what he wanted.

Mr. Leslie entered the house first, to find his wife waiting for them lamp in hand. She put up her face and her solemn husband stooped and kissed her and said, as he took his coat off:

"Well, here is Mr. Lawrie."

"But you said he was to be a lad. Why, he is nearly as tall as you are. He-he!"

And Jamie realised that he was quite as tall as Mr. Leslie and he fetched up as deep a voice as he could in himself to say:

"Good-evening, Mrs. Leslie, it is very good of you to have me."

"He-he!" she giggled. "We are only too pleased to oblige Mr. Keith."

Mr. Leslie had already proceeded to the back of the house and thither they followed, Mrs. Leslie giggling and Jamie saying to himself that if she didn't stop he would hit her in the back of the neck. She was a very little

woman, with high shoulders and a short waist, so that her crinoline seemed immense, rather like a huge cushion in which she was immersed. However after his day spent among men Jamie was grateful to her for being a woman and was not disposed to be critical. Homesickness with him had taken the form of a longing for his sister Mary.

The room in which he found himself was full of little Leslies all crowded round their father to watch him remove his boots. There were two boys and three girls, who at once became very shy and stole glances at each other as the lodger was presented to them. He shook hands with them all; cold, bony hands they had; and at once they became busy, preparing the supper. The eldest girl disappeared with her father's boots and returned in a moment with a toasting-fork and two rounds of bread which Mr. Leslie proceeded to toast. As he toasted he looked round the room. Presently he gave a cry of fury, threw down his toasting-fork and disappeared under the table. In a moment or two he emerged with a few crumbs in the palm of his hand.

"Who," he asked, "who is supposed to have brushed the carpet?"

"Se-Selina," said Mrs. Leslie in a quavering voice.

"I have at least the right," cried Mr. Leslie in an injured tone, "I have at least the right to expect that, while I am at work, slaving to keep life in your bodies, my house will be kept decent."

"Oh! Peter," cried his wife. "Before Mr. Lawrie too. Whatever will he think of us?"

"Selina," said Peter, "go to bed!"

Selina put out her tongue at her eldest brother and went out of the room.

Then Mr. Leslie picked up his toasting-fork.

"Ruined a piece of bread too."

"*We* didn't do that, papa," protested the eldest boy.

"Oh, George," giggled his mother, "don't torment your father. What must you think of us, Mr. Lawrie?"

"I don't think anything," replied Jamie nervously, wondering if Selina, who was a rather pretty child, was really to go supperless.

The eldest boy looked mischievous and said: "Does your father——?"

"Mr. Lawrie's father," said Peter solemnly, "Mr. Lawrie's father is dead."

That produced an oppressive silence which lasted through the meal and until the children had kissed their father and mother good-night. Jamie kissed the girls and shook hands with the boys, who grinned at him, and on his host's invitation drew up to the fire.

"He-he! Mr. Lawrie," said Mrs. Leslie. "What do you think of Thrigsby?"

"He's seen nothing of it yet," said her husband.

"He-he! Mr. Lawrie, I hope you like the office."

"How can he tell yet whether he likes it or not?"

"He-he! Mr. Lawrie, I should have known you were your uncle's nephew anywhere."

"I don't see the least likeness."

"He-he! Mr. Lawrie, you mustn't mind my husband."

"Why should he mind me, except at the office when he must do as I tell him?"

So the conversation went on until it was time for bed and then Mr. Leslie sent his wife upstairs, raked out the fire, shut the doors, lighted Jamie up to his room, brought him a nightgown and said he hoped he would sleep well and be up in time for breakfast at eight. Jamie said he would, but was half resolved to get up and go out into the night and sleep in the streets, anywhere where he could feel free of his memory of the supperless Selina, the gig-

gling Mrs. Leslie and the cutting, precise tones of her husband.—"I will go," he thought, "and awaken my uncle. I will bring him to the window and speak to him from the garden out of the darkness and tell him that as his nephew I am entitled to more consideration than he has shown me. I will tell him that if I am to lodge in the house of one of his clerks I would prefer it to be with Mr. Wilcox." The thought of his uncle, however, subdued his rebellion. He was already afraid of Andrew, and because of his fear he decided that he hated Peter Leslie, and would never stay but would go in search of his chest, disappear, make his fortune, return, provide Mary with a library and his mother with a coach and six.—Was this the fortune he had come to seek, all the way from Scotland? He was canny enough and did not expect success immediately to crown his efforts, but he did and he had the right to look for more inspiring company than a man who crawled after crumbs under the table, though to be sure illustrious men had picked up their first sixpence in the streets. Oh! but Andrew Keith had done no such thing, and Andrew Keith should have known better than to condemn his nephew to lodge with the Peter Leslies. "And," added Jamie in his excited thoughts, "and that nephew a Lawrie."—He got impatient with these thoughts of his but his bed was hard and knobbly and would not let him rest.—"I'd make him eat his crumbs," he cried. "And I'm danged if I sit copying letters in the room with him. Ay, I'll talk with Mr. Wilcox, and Bell can answer the folks at the window. Ech! I'm an ingrate, and my thoughts are wicked."—They were beginning to be haunted with visions of maidens, so out he got and dropped down on his knees and prayed a good, long Scots prayer of self-denunciation at the end of which he slipped in a plea for Mrs. Leslie—"O Lord, put it into

her heart not to giggle when she speaks to me"—and a blessing upon his mother. That done, he got into bed again and went to sleep almost in tears at the emotion he had contrived to put into the word Mesopotamia.

Selina woke him up in the morning. "Hullo!" he said. "Hungry?"

"Oh no! Why?"

"Didn't you have no supper?"

"Of course not," she said. "I had my supper in the kitchen. I always do, you know. Papa is in a very good temper this morning. He is talking in his whistling voice to the cat."

Echoing through the house Jamie heard a shrill falsetto screaming: "Oh! she *was* the filthy foumart, the foul and filthy, *and* the fœtid."

However, when he came downstairs, there was no sign of humour upon Mr. Leslie's countenance. Breakfast was hurried through and Mrs. Leslie said she would meet Jamie in the dinner hour to buy his clothes. He tried to protest that he was quite capable of getting them for himself but Mr. Leslie was firm and said that he must obey orders, and that Jamie must learn to obey them too.—"Whose orders?" asked Jamie.—"Your uncle's, Mr. Lawrie," replied Mrs. Leslie.—"Oh! my prophetic soul!" cried Jamie. "I would have saved a bit of the seven pound ten."—"That," interjected Mr. Leslie, "is still possible. Your wages are to be paid to me and I am to allow you eight shillings a week, until the seven pounds ten are paid off, when I am to raise the sum to ten shillings a week."—Jamie went as red as a turkey and gobbled like one in his rage and shame.—He felt that his uncle was mischievous and malevolent and all-powerful and his high spirit could not bow to his bidding. Resentment had been obscure in him until tyranny touched his

pocket.—"I'll go in rags!" he said.—"Oh! Mr. Lawrie!" giggled Mrs. Leslie. "You can't do that. What would your mamma think if we let you go about in rags? for I regard myself as more responsible to your mamma than to your uncle, Mr. Lawrie."

Have his mother, have Tom know that he had lost his chest? Never! Jamie capitulated.

The morning had produced three more little Leslies, two girls and a baby boy who was tied to the leg of the dining-table and allowed to sprawl as he pleased over the floor.

"You see," said Mrs. Leslie, "I can't help feeling for you as a mother and thinking how my own boys will be when they leave me."

"My mother," said Jamie, "brought us up on ninety pounds a year, and is proud of it."

"You must be very fond of her, Mr. Lawrie. I shall write to her——"

"What on earth can you say to her?" grumbled her husband.

"Oh! just a little friendly something."

Jamie liked her for that. She had found the phrase to describe herself, and it fortified him in his dislike of her unbending husband.—"I think I shall be very happy here," he said. "Until I find my way about.—And I am sure my mother will be glad to hear from you."

Mr. Leslie drew his purse from his pocket, placed some silver coins on the mantelpiece, and announced that it was time to go. He gave orders that the parlour was to be swept and dusted by Friday night when Mr. Wilcox and perhaps one or two others would be coming in for a friendly evening.—"Will they require refreshments?" asked Mrs. Leslie.—"Of course there will be refreshments. Cakes and gingerbread and I will buy a bottle

of sherry wine. You didn't think I would invite my friends here to *starve.*" Mr. Leslie had a most exasperating trick of emphasis. He seemed to be always vibrant with irritation. In his most empty remarks, even his most insignificant gesture, he was Leslie *contra mundum,* and he inspired Jamie, as he did his children and the clerks at the office, with awe.

There was absolutely no deception about the Leslie household. It existed by, with or from Peter, the most uxorious of men, and therefore, in his own eyes, the best of husbands and fathers. He had no other conviction. In order to be the best of husbands and fathers he did his duty by his employer and fulfilled his duty to God as a churchwarden at the newly built church of S. James the Less in Kennedy Street. (Half the streets in that district of Thrigsby bore Scots names.) No denying Peter's authority in his own home. If his children asked Why, he replied: "Because I say so"; and if they made the least show of protest he would say: "Don't argue with me!"

He took charge of Jamie's religious education and persuaded him to sing in the choir. This meant that two at least of the young man's evenings in the week were safely accounted for.

CHAPTER V

SUFFERING

IF there was no subtlety about Peter Leslie, so that you had the whole man in his conceit, there were continual astonishments in his wife. Her thoughts were like flies on a wall, bewildering to herself and to those with whom she conversed until they learned to ignore her prattle, and to accept the friendly happiness that bubbled out of her. Jamie learned to do this almost insensibly from her children, who never paid any attention to anything she said and treated her always with affectionate indulgence. She had stories of fables and old songs which were an even greater delight to her than they were to her family. Indeed it always seemed an effort to her to remember that she was older than her children and she would make that effort only when her husband was in the house. Jamie used to marvel at her indifference to Selina's or Layton's misdeeds. She would never be angry, but would say, as if to remind herself: "You know your father will be quite upset!" and then she would take steps to repair or conceal the damage, even sometimes going as far as to pawn her clothes or her jewels to obtain money. But against Peter she would never defend Selina or Layton, though she would argue for the little ones who could not present a case against injustice.

She admitted Jamie to her family and treated him as a child, that is to say, as her equal. He responded and

was devoted to her, though his happiness with her aggravated his sensibility and made the adult affairs in which he had to take part outside her house repellent to him. Peter became a bugbear for he was so obsequious in the office, so self-assertive (not to say self-worshipful) at home. And Jamie suffered, continually and obscurely, suffered so acutely at moments that he was astonished at his own general cheerfulness. How to make a career in a world that took absolutely no notice of him, snarled at him when he did ill and ignored what he did well, and was not in the least interested to find out what he could or could not do? The indifference of the world outside Mrs. Leslie aggravated his tendency to feel that he was at least as great as Napoleon, and when he bungled a job at the office he would tell himself that it was because the work was beneath his powers. Heavens! How slowly the days would go, how the weeks would drag, how the life at home slipped away from him, leaving him flaccid, cut off from his original source of energy! The letters that came from home were a mockery: his brothers regarded him with envy, his mother with pride and hope. He was out in the world making a career! Making a——? Making a fool of himself, falling in love with Mrs. Leslie and Selina (aged 13) in turn. And that was a new source of misery. Selina would tease him and Mrs. Leslie was entirely impervious to his passion and would kiss and fondle him innocently and maternally, until he would be sick with hatred of Peter as the insuperable bar to the satisfaction of his desires. He gave up singing in the choir on that account. His conscience would not allow him to sing the *Magnificat* or the *Nunc dimittis* while his heart was full of loathing of Peter Leslie sitting there so smug in the churchwarden's pew with his wife and

five children behind him. Jamie gave up singing in the choir and when Peter inquired into the matter said that the church was too High for him and took himself off to a Low one, where he became enamoured of a maiden, the daughter of a saddler, forgot both Mrs. Leslie and Selina and was for a few months extremely and lugubriously pious.

His intentions were honourable. He was invited to tea by the saddler in the best parlour above the shop, and, being entirely at a loss for conversation, avowed himself and was accepted as a suitor. He was horrified but unable to extricate himself. The duties were arduous, the maiden exacting and devout. On Sundays the unhappy youth was kept praying and singing from early morn to late night. When he was left alone with the object of his affections for an hour in the afternoon she made him read aloud from the sermons of the late Vicar of Thrigsby.

It was a great relief to him when his uncle was informed of the affair and crushed it with a word. The saddler was given to understand that young Lawrie was not and had no chance of being his uncle's heir and when Jamie next visited the parlour above the shop it was to find a spotty-faced rival nursing the volume of sermons. Now rivalry was odious to his temper. He hated a contest and avoided this as he had avoided all others in his life. Having no wish to beat or be beaten, he renounced his affections and aspirations, and attended yet another church, emphatically Broad, vowing that he would not again have his religion disturbed by his affections, which he had begun to distrust. They had so often led him into terrible thoughts, an alarming perception, for instance, of the shape of Mrs. Leslie beneath her crinoline. Another appalling discrepancy!

Why should a woman's form be so unlike that of her clothes? And why—for questions breed like maggots in the brain—why should the emotions roused by woman in her clothes he so shocked and confused by the idea of their removal?—Such thoughts, such questions as these had writhed even through the Vicar's sermons.—Even religion, therefore, was an inadequate protection. However, such as it was, Jamie clung to it. He wanted to show himself worthy as the son of his mother and the nephew of his uncle, to prosper in his career, to have his little corner of the world at his feet. But how to do it? Ah! there was the rub. He insisted on knowing how it was to be done, and could not accept it as a thing that would happen, just as at a very early age he had rummaged among Doctor M'Phail's books to satisfy himself as to the manner of his birth and thereafter had taken the keenest interest in the serving of a sow on his uncle's farm and had contrived to be present at her delivery of twelve little pigs.—Hearsay was no good to him and yet he clung to religion because he was almost as much afraid of his thoughts as he was of his affections.—Poor wretch! And this is to be his story, the tale of his joy and suffering who could never accept either except upon his own terms, and yet, through life, never lost his faith in his fellow-men, nor abandoned hope of satisfaction in living among them!

Uncle Andrew commanded his presence at dinner one Sunday.

"Well, well, and how are we getting on? And how do we like our work?"

"I don't find it very difficult, thank you, Uncle."

"Ah! we don't find it difficult. No, no. Only the brain, the controlling brain, is sensible of the difficulty of making a profit.—You never thought of that? Hah!"

"Yes. I did think of that." This was not true but Jamie's mind rushed at the idea, and, as usual, pushed beyond it, and made him say:

"Yes. I suppose that is why the brain takes the profit."

"Eh!" Andrew regarded his nephew with dislike and uneasiness, half suspecting him of impertinence behind the innocence of his boyish face. "Eh? Eh, hem! The labourer is worthy of his hire."

But Jamie was no longer interested. He had failed to grasp the idea which had heated his brain. He was much more interested in wondering how long he would be expected to stay after dinner.

"I have good accounts of you in the office and I am pleased to hear that you are regular in attending church. I like regularity. Keep your Sundays regular and it steadies you from Monday to Saturday. Nothing better for a young man. But—m-m-m—saddler's daughter —marriage—No!"

"No!" repeated Jamie emphatically. "No!"

"What the devil do you mean? I hadn't said what I was going to say."

"No. I mean, if you knew Mrs. Leslie and how hard put to it she is to make both ends meet, you'd think twice about marrying."

"Silence, sir! I did not put you to lodge with Leslie that you might spy upon their affairs."

"Good Lord," thought Jamie. "I've done it now."

Then suddenly Andrew became kind in his tone and said: "You must learn to keep your tongue in your head—you've an old head for your years—or I don't know what will become of you."

Then Jamie felt very sorry for himself and answered meekly:

"Yes, Uncle."

"You'll be sent to the mill soon and after that a taste of the travelling will do you no harm. Do you know French?"

"A little."

"Better rub up your French. We may be wanting presentable young men to go to France. If you like I'll pay for you to have French lessons. That will help to keep you out of mischief in the evenings."

"Thank you, Uncle.—(*Will* he pay?)"

That ended the meal, but not the discomfort of uncle and nephew. Jamie, gazing at the big white face, was awed by it and expected some wisdom, some oracular guidance to come out of it. No such thing happened, however, and he had to reconcile himself to being sent empty away. Mischief in the evenings! What mischief? He felt insulted. He was getting tired of the assumption that he was a danger to himself, which he was beginning to find on all sides—in Peter Leslie, in Mrs. Leslie, in his mother's letters and now in his uncle, the master of his destiny. At least they might let him know in what the danger consisted, instead of hinting at it. They had all recommended religion as a safeguard and he had no objection to religion. It had its merits though in the English Church they were rather watered down; there were no good hair-raising prayers from the pulpit, neither were sermons so withering and scornful; on the other hand there was something good-tempered and satisfactory about English hymns, though the rhymes in them were rather far-fetched. Also going to church provided something to do and people to see on Sunday, and, besides, it made him feel sly and mischievous as though he were lying in wait to cry Peep-bo to that from which he was hiding.—What was it? Ah!

that danger, that mischief!—He felt very sure his uncle knew what it was. Almost he was convinced that it was in his uncle's power to chain it up or to loose it upon him. And all that came out of his uncle was a recommendation to learn French, which was absurd.

It was maddening that all his visits to his uncle should end thus fantastically. Old Andrew was the only human being in Thrigsby to whom he owed any natural affection, and his mother was constantly assuring him that he owed a great deal. But no sooner did he enter the door of the house than his natural affection was laid down with his hat and overcoat and he knew that he would spend the time gazing fascinated at the white face like a rabbit at a snake. The white face haunted him. It swung in the spaces of his universe like a moon. His fear of it oozed over into the emotions reserved for his religion and became one with it. But as yet he had no other thought. The moon-face was the only light upon his life and by it he walked, warily because of the shadows, but, as yet, light-heartedly enough.

"Oh! yes, Uncle, I would be gey and pleased to go to France. It is a great, rich country."

"I was never there but once, but I am told it will be a good market."

Market! Jamie swallowed that word though it was like a prickly burr upon the romantic notions that had began to stir in his head. Old Andrew squashed them further by saying:

"Now that you have taken your place in the office, I think it would be well if you made the acquaintance of your cousins the Greigs. They will be a very powerful family and useful to your in your career."

"Yes, Uncle."

When Andrew talked like that Jamie simply did not understand him. In his idea, his career was to grow naturally out of his extraordinary or ordinary merits. (For he had begun to see that they remained to be proved.) Careers were begotten not made, and so far he had no occasion to doubt that his would be conceived, shaped and born complete in all its parts. The possibility of its being mis-shapen was not worth a thought and never got one. It was to grow like a leaf out of Andrew's perfection, though not so did Jamie think of it, but rather of Andrew producing it, pressing it into his hand with his extended two fingers as he did once with Tommy years ago when he tipped him. And herein lay one source of our hero's discomfort. Time after time did he go to his uncle's house and not even a portion of the career was forthcoming: talk of being moved to the mills, of travelling, and now of being sent to France, and then these awful suggestions that he had better make himself pleasant to people who would later on be useful to him: never any hint from the white face of acknowledging that his nephew *qua* nephew was remarkable. That was implied, though Jamie never saw it, in the mere fact of his presence at the table. The implication forced him to sink his individuality, to be nephew but not James; and so he suffered, he suffered absurdly in all his dealings: he suffered from contact with his uncle, from the dutiful correspondence he kept up with his mother, before his God, and in the presence of every women he ever encountered, regardless of age. The ridiculous adventure with the saddler's daughter was the only relief he ever had. Reading the Vicar's sermons to her he could pour floods of emotion into the sluggish periods, and though the maiden never suspected them, they were as great a relief to him as the word

Mesopotamia was to Mr. Wilcox. But there again he suffered because he was left ashamed of himself. Shame aggravated his excitement and he was every moment conscious of himself, hot and molten and overrunning a world which was far too small to hold him. Even God was rather diminished since it was some reflection upon His powers that he had failed to design a world large enough for a man.

In vain did he practise that self-abasement for which, as a Scotsman, he had a native talent and an enormous appetite. It turned his suffering into torment and gave him the horrid pleasure of martyrdom. Not daring yet to tell himself that he was suffering for the sins of the world, he was soon persuaded that he was bearing so much for his mother and his brothers. In this he was aided by his mother, from whom he had been unable to conceal his distress. She took it for a sign that he was coming to heel and was being licked by the world into appreciation of his duty towards herself. At great length she told him how the pain of parting with him was being healed by the knowledge of his industry, the nobility with which he bore his solitude, and his kindness and consideration to his hostess.—For Mrs. Leslie sent in a monthly report.—He took all this approbation with a proper modesty, but, fundamentally, with indifference. It did not allay his suffering: that endured until he had a letter from his mother when he had been nearly ten months from home. As usual Margaret exhorted him to go in fear of the Lord, and of his Uncle Andrew, and respectful humility before herself and his dead father, and wound up with the tale of a domestic tragedy. His sister Margaret had washed her head one Saturday night and as she dried her hair before the fire, a spark had flown out; her hair, her

beautiful soft hair had all been burned away, down to the scalp. The poor child was extremely ill. Her hair would never grow again and she would have to wear a wig, but, of course, could not possibly wear a wig until she was of an age to put her hair up in a net. Till then she would have to conceal her misfortune with a mutch.

This story was to Jamie enormously funny. He could see Margaret in a wig or in an old woman's mutch and he laughed over the thought of it. He would have welcomed a calamity in his own life, but, as none was forthcoming, he was glad of this of his sister's and it was as absurd to him as any of his own would have been. In some mysterious way he thought of it as a slap for old Moon-face.—"How's that for a proof that there's a stir in the world? A wee lassie wi' a wig! Have ye ever thought o' anything finer than that in your office or your big house? But that's the droll thing has happened in a wee house in Scotland."—Then began in Jamie the first stirrings of defiance. He was so alarmed by them that he went to every possible service on the next Sunday: in the evening with the Leslies, and, sitting behind Selina, so that he could not but see her plump little legs as she knelt, he vowed that he loved her and her alone and would wed her so soon as she was a woman, before she had encountered the cruel, the vile world, and devote his life to the protection of her innocence. This idea crept into him as his suffering left him and he was shocked by the violence with which it gripped him. It was an ideal! *She* should never suffer, *she* should never wear a wig, she should be white and stainless while the bestiality of the world daubed its slime upon his heroic soul. He was filled with courage and exaltation marred only by a doubt as to whether he

ought not there and then to inform Mrs. Leslie of his intentions. Courage failed him, but that night, when Selina came to curtsey to him, as her mother insisted she should, he astonished her, himself and the assembled family by imprinting a chaste and paternal kiss upon her brow.—Ah! but he suffered no more, and thought he would never suffer again, for the world had grown large once more, an enormous shrine for his ideal which took shape dimly as a statue of the Virgin Mary bearing a very remote resemblance to Selina. He called it Selina and was content—even to go on waiting in the room at the office with Peter Leslie and Mr. Wilcox until the word came for him to go to the mills or on the road.

CHAPTER VI

WORDS

MAGGIE'S tragic loss of her hair had the important consequence of driving Mary out into the world before her time. It was the common resolve of the family that Maggie should have the best wig that money could buy in a couple of years when she should be old enough to wear it. Mary wrote to Jamie to tell him he must subscribe while she herself would begin to earn money at once. Come what might Maggie should not go out bald into the world. The threat of this catastrophe roused Jamie as his own discontent had never done. He asked to be removed from the office and was placed in the warehouse, given the work of a clerk who was dying of a consumption, and half that clerk's salary, his board and lodging with the Leslies being paid by his uncle.—He needed very little money and did not yet resent his state of dependence and supervision. He was earning very near the amount which had sufficed for his whole family and more than twice the sum paid to his sister for her teaching in Edinburgh. Measuring his conditions by that standard he thought he had every reason to be satisfied.—When he was no longer with Peter Leslie during the day he began almost to like him, and to appreciate his simplicity, his contentment, his freedom from doubt or qualm. Also as the father of

Selina there was something to be said for him.—Selina was adorable, growing every day in grace as every day she put on beauty and wore it as though she were afraid of it, afraid of herself. Big eyes she had, too big for her face, which was framed in gold ringlets on either side. And as she grew she put on more and more clothes which stiffened her, made her more unreal, more apt to Jamie's idealism. When she went into her crinoline, as she did on Sundays, she was altogether removed from her devoted and secret lover, who for that felt only the more worshipfully that she was Woman.—He thanked Heaven for guiding his heart to a pure love in the years of peril.—How good Selina was on Sundays! She would sing and pray in church with a demure concentration that moved Jamie to a choking love and at the same time reproached him for being moved and urged his attention to follow hers—straight up the aisle to the chancel rails. And as they walked home to the dinner of roast beef, Yorkshire pudding and pastry she would allow Jamie to carry her prayer-book, precious burden! and ask him if he did not think her papa was the best man in the world. Jamie, to please her, would agree and forget the bullying she had had from her parent before the woman in her began so astonishingly to emerge from the child. Her papa was the best of men and her mamma was already "poor dear."

The arrival of Selina in the adult world startled Mrs. Leslie into an attempt to be old. She bought a cap and tried it for a week but then discarded it. Also she entrusted Selina with certain of her duties but soon reclaimed them. There was something of a tussle between mother and daughter. Mrs. Leslie won and reduced Selina to the position of her pupil to learn the mystery of keeping house, baking bread, sewing and mending.

As she mastered these accomplishments Selina paraded them before Jamie, who marvelled, and before her father, who began to dote on her, and to allow her to a certain extent to replace her mother in his thoughts. The household for a time became happier because of the miracle which had taken place in it. Finding a young creature whose charm was accessible to him saved Jamie from much tormented egoism and little by little he found the courage to be lyrical. Much of his life outside the warehouse seemed to him to be pure song, and, because he had this outlet, his work was less baleful to him, nor was he oppressed by the tyranny of those above him. He began to write long, warm and happy letters to his mother, who dashed him rather by urging him to take life more seriously and to remember his responsibility to those he had left behind him. "Remember," she said: "The glory of a woman is her hair" (poor Maggie!), "but the glory of a man is his strength. Your Uncle Andrew is very pleased with you. Never forget his generosity and remember that slow and sure are bound to succeed. Brilliancy was always your danger, but brilliancy is a glittering snare. Oh! I do pray that you may be kept safe in the terrible city until I can come with Tom and feel sure of you. I am a little anxious about Mary. It seems that she is mixing with philosophers. They will turn her head. It is so fortunate that she is not beautiful."—"The glory of a woman," cried Jamie to himself, "is her tenderness, her purity, all that makes her woman, so delicate and soft, the spirit of the dove amid harshness and despair." He said this because Selina's hair was not one of her strong points and also because he was not aware of being particularly strong. Hair and strength therefore were not words which he could charge with his lyrical impulse, and that was the

great discovery on which he was living now so happily.

After her arrival in Edinburgh his sister Mary took to sending him her poems—Odes to the East Wind, to the Castle, to High Street and the Wynds, to Mr. H. and to Professor B.'s plaid. He was roused to emulation and found that he could do much better himself, though, perhaps, not quite so well as Robert Burns. However, he had his moments and leaped from one to another towards maturity, and with each leap he adored the idea of Selina more and was less amorously conscious of her. At last, when he woke to the fact that Selina had a number of other admirers, and in spite of her youth, was extremely adroit in playing them off one against the other, he was astonished to find that he did not mind in the least. He wrote innumerable poems to her name and never showed her one. The only person who was allowed to read a few of the more impersonal effusions was Mr. Wilcox, who, finding them unsuitable for recitation, was discouraging.

The miracle of Selina had its effect also on Mr. Wilcox, whom Jamie had always thought of as a person beyond redemption old. He became, suddenly, in the course of one afternoon, a companion, almost an equal. He sought Jamie out one day in the warehouse to ask him if he would mind, just for once, playing the part of a boy in a little farce he was getting up—nothing very great—just something to amuse at a Ladies' Night at the Gentlemen's Concerts. As Jamie hesitated, Mr. Wilcox proceeded to say that he knew Church people did not altogether approve of the theatre—he knew that—but this was for a charity. So grateful was Jamie to Mr. Wilcox for his sudden accession to the ranks of acknowledgeable and not awful persons that he consented. He would have given him the clothes off his back in that

moment! It was an easy matter to give the scruples of the religion to which he was attached by the image of Selina. So he gave them and promised and was at once attacked by conscience. He dared say nothing to the Leslies, whose most reckless gaiety was a Spelling Bee. He had to invent excuses to be able to attend rehearsals and he felt so guilty as he made them that Peter at once began to suspect him and became sarcastic:—"Has our young friend begun to take lessons in Chinese or Choctaw? . . . I will not allow Mrs. Leslie to sit up for you. I will sit up myself."—"Oh! I don't want you to do that, sir. I am not likely to be late, but I could take the key," replied Jamie.—*The* key! Not for one moment would Peter part with that. Not even his wife was entrusted with it; never. To avoid letting it out of his hands Peter would go to the farthest limits of ingenuity, exhibit in the matter of sitting up at night the most heroic endurance.—"No, sir," he cried. "This is not an apartment house, nor is Mrs. Leslie a landlady. We do not take lodgers. We are only too happy to oblige your uncle and to admit you to our family. Admitted to it, you must acknowledge me as the head of it."—"As I have done, and do."—"Then where," said Peter, suddenly flattered into self-betrayal, "where are you going?"—"About my business," almost shouted Jamie, and Peter countered with: "You are not old enough to have any."

Off went Jamie fuming. Peter had gone too far that time. His curiosity was getting beyond a joke. It was time he learned that he had to deal with a Lawrie. He might pry and spy—as he did—upon his own family, insisting on reading all letters that came to the house and most of those that went out of it, but when it came to a Lawrie—hands off! In his indignation Jamie

knocked Peter down from the pedestal on which as Selina's father he had set him and put Mr. Wilcox on it in his stead.

That worthy gave his young friend a drink when he arrived, rum-toddy hot. His rooms were cosy, and, Jamie felt, excitingly disreputable, though in the detail of its furniture it was not unlike the Leslies' dining-room. Perhaps it was the play bills on the wall—Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, Sadler's Wells, and the prints of the great Kemble, Sarah Siddons and the Little Theatres in the Haymarket.

"Extraordinary," said Mr. Wilcox, "how like you are to Kemble; something between him and Henry Fielding. Ah! What would I not have given to have had your nose. A tragic nose: no mistake about it; a nose like that gives you the air, the tragic air, the dignity. Now with your nose and my talent, do you know where I should be?"

"I do not," replied Jamie.

"At the top of the tree. Where was Kean when they discovered him?—But a face like mine is a calamity. Can you express a tragic fire in a suet dumpling? You just watch my face when it should be showing horror." He recited the last few lines of Clarence's speech from *Richard III.* with such vigour and intensity that Jamie shivered all up his spine and paid no heed to the amazing contortions going on on Mr. Wilcox's round pale face. It took longer for the auditor than for the reciter to recover.

"Well?" asked Mr. Wilcox.

"That was very good," replied Jamie.—"I've never seen a play."

"Good! I should think so. It's the Swan, but it wants

dignity: it wants Kemble, it wants Kean, it wants a face like yours. Try, do try."

So Jamie repeated the words until he had them nearly by heart. Then he let fly.—"Oh! oh! oh!" cried Mr. Wilcox in ecstasy. "It's a mask, it's a tragic mask, your face; but don't lose yourself, never, never lose yourself. Keep in the last inch and a bit, so that you know that it is yourself being not yourself.—Ah! that's better. Ah! that's acting, that is.—Remember, it's a dream.—'Some lay in dead men's skulls.'—Come, I'll read you the play."

So saying, Mr. Wilcox stood up by the mantelpiece and read aloud for a couple of hours, at the end of which, closing the book, he said:—"Ah! that's literature, that is! That's what you should be up to with those verses of yours; get them so that they fill your voice."

"I wrote one the other day which I said over to myself. I had a bath and I said it out loud."

"Let's have it then! Let's have it?"

"But what about the rehearsal?"

"Oh, we can't rehearse after the Bard. We can do without rehearsal. You don't have anything to say. You're just a boy in the street. I'm a blind beggar. You steal my dog. A real dog on the stage. That's what keeps Punch and Judy alive—dog Toby. But let's have it—the poem, I mean."

Jamie gulped down a nausea which was creeping over him and in a huge voice, as near a copy as he could get to Mr. Wilcox's, he roared:

"I am thy daunted lover and I go
Abashed, ashamed and fearful of thy 'No!'
Ah! could I say what hopes within me swell
I'd change the world with my heart's miracle."

"Too thin! Too thin!" cried Mr. Wilcox. "But gifted, gifted. . . . Come, what follows?"

Tears rushed to Jamie's eyes:—"That's all!" he confessed. "It didn't seem to me to need any more. At least I didn't feel any more."

Mr. Wilcox tried to console him by saying that he might use it for an encore piece, but the unhappy youth was beyond consolation. It was torn out of his fancies. Mr. Wilcox, Shakespeare, King Richard had provided him with a reality by the test of which all his life since he had come to Thrigsby withered away. What words! Like the tail of a comet. He caught hold of it and was whirled away.—He had another rum-toddy and sat with Mr. Wilcox talking, talking, of the theatre, of life, of love, of the abominations of commerce, of the remorseless tyranny of Keith Bros. & Stevenson.—"Can you conceive,' said Mr. Wilcox, shining rummily, "Lord Byron in our office? He would dash himself to death against the bars of his cage. Ledgers and books do not a dungeon make, nor office walls a prison. I am free as my talent, my art——"—"Free! Free!" echoed Jamie. —"And you, a poet, handsome as a god, brilliant as a Bacchus, will never be a slave."—"Never!" sobbed Jamie, "never!" He caught sight of the misty face of the clock. It said half-past eleven. He rose unsteadily to his feet and lurched away. Half way home he was seized with a poetic impulse and stood in the middle of the road until he had found a rhyme for wig.—At last he found himself back at the Leslies'. Peter was waiting up for him. Jamie burst into tears and rushed away upstairs to hear, as he reached the landing, Peter's deep voice saying: "Pah! Degraded beast!"

CHAPTER VII

AFFAIRS

I WAS fou," said Jamie as he woke up and it was as though someone else had spoken the words in a tone of loud reproach, and as he went down the stairs they creaked "Fou! Fou!" at every step. No one looked at him, no one spoke to him at breakfast, after which Peter astonished him by saying a long grace, ending:—"Lord, make us fit to eat our food this day."—Jamie caught Selina's eye. It made him blush.—"Does she know?" he thought. "I am unworthy. I am sullied."

But as soon as he was out of the house his condition vanished. He squared himself and felt that he was a man and had asserted himself. Old Peter had not dared to say anything.—"Oh aye," he said to himself, "I'm sullied and the deil's the better for it." And he began to take a keen pleasure in the morning air, in the fields along which he had to skirt, with the black river flowing through them; in the girls with their shawls over their heads going to the mills; in the children trotting along with their fathers; in the tall smoking chimneys that grew more and more closely together as he approached the warehouse. And suddenly he found his rhyme to wig:

"Wee Maggie need not scratch her wig
When flies upon it dance a jig."

He laughed merrily and his heart was filled with affection for Maggie and the sense of home possessed him so that he became almost defiant of the town wherein he was a foreigner.—Thrigsby on the Irk. What a name for a river! But the Thrigsbeians were pleased with it. They were pleased with everything. Always, they said, they were a day ahead of the rest of England.—"I'm pleased with myself too," said Jamie, and for a moment or two he felt so. Then he thought with shame of Mr. Wilcox praising his face, his nose; and yet, coming from Mr. Wilcox there was no cause for shame. The man was carried away. Fou? Nay, drunk with words. —"I must go canny," thought Jamie. "I wouldna be like Mr. Wilcox for the world. But all the same I'd rather be he than Mr. Leslie."

There was a very pleasant savour in thus weighing up this strange world, his ideas of which were beginning to take shape.

He found Mr. Wilcox pacing up and down outside the office door waiting for him.—"Ah! ah!" he cried. "I was afraid you were not coming. I was afraid you were perhaps—ah—the worse. I was oppressed by a feeling that I had been inconsiderate. I find it hard to remember that you are so young. And from the way Mr. Leslie looked at me when he came in I was afraid——"

"If I murdered my mother," replied Jamie, "I would not tell Mr. Leslie." And he was hurt and puzzled because Mr. Wilcox laughed, for he was unaware of the grotesqueness of his words. Mr. Wilcox whistled "Scots Wha Hae," and brought his hand down on his young friend's shoulder and said:—"Oh! he's a good sort is old Leslie and I've seen him liquored too."—"Mr. Leslie?"—Mr. Wilcox winked:—"A fine sight,"

he said, "but I'm bound to say that I think it was an accident, as indeed it is with most of us."

Jamie was grateful to him for that. It removed the sting from Peter's words, and gave him absolution. He had fallen, yes, but as he might fall in the street from treading on the peel of an orange. How wonderfully Mr. Wilcox smoothed out the difficult path! Mr. Wilcox appeared, and lo! there were no difficulties; only pleasures and proud accomplishments. He made a man feel that he *was* a man, with a place in the world, and a big voice inside him wherewith to make himself heard. Feeling altogether a man, Jamie held out his hand and Mr. Wilcox took it and clasped it warmly, genially, comradely.

"Good!" said Mr. Wilcox; "we'll have other evenings."

"Aye!" replied Jamie, "but I'll no be fou again. It's in my head still and my tongue is parched."

"Tut!" said Mr. Wilcox. "You know what it is and if you do no worse than that you'll come to no great harm."

"Harm?" replied Jamie. "It's good I'm to come to. I'm the eldest of my family and my youngest sister has had a great misfortune."

"You'll do," said Mr. Wilcox, "you'll do, but devil take me if I know what you're to do in Keith's."

Jamie set his jaw, squared his shoulders and with the one word: "Work!" plunged in at the warehouse door.

Just before the midday interval he was sent for to his uncle's room. Moon-face sat there with his finger-tips pressed together, crooning through his shut lips. The little eyes under the puckered lids shot a curt greeting. Fear and exasperation ran through Jamie, but he pulled

himself together and, glaring at the heavy figure sitting at the table, he said to himself: "He's a man, and I'm a man. Figs to him."—And there shot into his mind what he had lately heard in the office, how Andrew Keith's wife had run away from him, with a Turk. A Turk, bigod! Almost a nigger! And how on the day she did it Andrew came down to the office as though nothing had happened, and that very day scooped in one of the biggest deals he had ever handled. And she was a very beautiful woman, was Mrs. Andrew.—"Yes, sir," said Jamie.—"Sit down."—Jamie sat down wondering if Peter Leslie had told. But there was no meance in Andrew's face; only the usual stony indifference. What a monument of a man! Perhaps in his icy way his view of his nephew's downfall was as generous as Mr. Wilcox's. To Jamie's relief Andrew's first words were almost kindly. There was a thaw in the frozen air.

"Let me see," said Andrew.

"Yes, Uncle."

"You are now in the warehouse."

"Yes, Uncle."

"And liking it, I hope?"

"Yes, Uncle. I like some of the men very much."

"That is not what I asked. The work, I meant. I want to know how much you have learned since you have been with us. Can you describe for me the processes of the business?—Where does the cotton come from, what do we do with it, where do we send it?"

"It comes from America. We spin it and weave it and ship it to all parts of the world, but especially to the East."

"Good, but it is not quite so simple as all that."

"No, Uncle."

"And why is it not so simple?"

"I suppose because there are so many other people doing it."

Andrew swung round and glared at his nephew.

"Have you learnt nothing of the reputation of the firm?"

"Oh, yes, Uncle. It is one of the biggest firms. But you see I have only had to do with the order-books and the stock-books."

"Ever heard of a place called the Exchange? There are people called brokers, there are people called agents! You may have heard of them?"

"Oh, yes."

"Then what do you imagine they are all doing?"

"Buying and selling."

"But what?"

Jamie was by now completely bewildered.

"You may not be aware that I have written books on the subject."

"No, Uncle."

"Did you come into my firm to learn the business, or did you not?"

"Yes, Uncle. You told me to learn French and I have been doing so. I thought perhaps I was to go to Lille with Mr. Mackintosh."

"You must know something of the business before you can represent the firm."

"Indeed, sir, I did learn what I could from the stock-books and the order-books."

"You could have learnt that in a week and then come and asked to be transferred."

Jamie was humiliated and enraged. He had been hurt at being so thoroughly ignored and now to find that the ignoring had been deliberate was too much. Andrew had said, "Employer and employee."—Em-

ployees never were allowed near Andrew. Why was no one ever straightforward with him except poor silly Wilcox, old Cocks-and-hens?

"I confess," said Andrew, "that I am disappointed, grieved and disappointed. I gave you an opening for which many young men would give their eyes and you behave as though the firm existed merely to provide you with an occupation. I am used to that from my clerks, but from my own nephew——"

"But you said I was to forget here—you said it in this room—you said that I was to forget that I was your nephew."

"Well, well," said Andrew, "You're frank, that's something, that's something. But I want you to get on. You'll never get on unless you take an interest and find things out for yourself. I have been in correspondence with your mother. Your brother Thomas is a little young to make a start, but she is anxious to be with you, though I have assured her that your conduct has been altogether satisfactory."

Jamie blushed.

"We have arranged therefore that after your holiday, which you are to take in August, she and your brothers and sisters shall return with you and set up in some small house. I shall start you then with a substantial addition to your present nominal salary. Until your holiday you must make up for lost time."

"Yes, Uncle."

"That will do."

"I'm sorry I have disappointed you. I really was interested. The men——"

"Men," said Andrew, "are not interesting."

"But Mr. Leslie——"

"Is Mr. Leslie to be your model or am I?"

Involuntarily Jamie groaned:

"Neither, God help me!"

"What did you say?" asked Andrew, and Jamie on a sudden flux of emotion cried:

"Please, Uncle Andrew, let me go. I want to please you and my mother. I have no other ambition. I don't want to say anything which will distress you, but I'm afraid we do not understand each other very well. You must give me time. To-day I am afraid I am not very well. I don't altogether know what I am saying."

"Tut, tut," rejoined Andrew, and he rose and planted himself in front of the fire, tucked down his head and swung his hands behind his back.—"You must," he said, "you must learn to take a serious view of things. Here in Thrigsby we are creating the future of England. Look at the Peels! It was their determination that the great business houses should be represented in the Government. What they aimed at they achieved. Let that be your motto. What is the motto of the Keiths?—*Surge!* I don't forget it. We're plain men in Thrigsby. No fal-lals about us, but we hit the mark every time. Think of the Peels and cultivate the civic virtues."—Andrew opened his mouth a little wider for a flow of eloquence, but Jamie cut him short with "Yes, Uncle," and bolted from the room. He could bear it no more, but no sooner was he out in the passage than he was filled with alarm. This time surely he had done it! His uncle would never forgive him. He must go back at once and apologise, for he had his mother to think of and Tom and wee Maggie. So he crept back and tapped nervously at the door.—"Come in!"—He sidled in. Old Andrew was at his table sitting with his finger-tips pressed together. He looked up.—"Well?"

"I—I—" said Jamie,—"I thought I heard you call."

—"I? No, oh, no!"—The moon-face was blank and forbidding.—"I was afraid," said Jamie, "I had interrupted you."—"No, no. I had said all I wished to say."—"I'm sorry if I——"

There was a long pause. At last Andrew exclaimed: "Get out."

Jamie with one bound was through the door. He closed it and leaned against the wall shaking with merriment. His fears had been so absurd. Already Moon-face had forgotten him. All that he had said had been just talk. With painful suddenness Jamie realised that he ought to have been flattering the old man. The idea was horrible to him and he shook it away and sought relief in mockery: "O Uncle, teach me to walk in thy footsteps, that I may be terrible to my nephews when I have any, and they may respect me and wonder what the devil's going on behind my big white face!"

He sought out Mr. Wilcox then and asked him: "Do you think I'll ever make a Parliament man?"—"Well," rejoined Wilcox, "your face would look well on a statue when you're dead."—"I've been talking to my uncle, and I'm to be like the Peels."—"I don't think you're hard enough and I don't think you'll ever be rich enough. These cotton-spinners think it's their merits makes London look at them, but it isn't; it's their money."—"I think I could spend money all right."—"I've no doubt of that, but you'd never make it except you married a rich wench."—Jamie's thoughts flew to Selina. "I'll never do that," he said and then broke away: "Tell me, Mr. Wilcox, how much do you know about the business?"—"Why, it goes on. It turns over a mint of money. I get my little bit out of it and that's all I care about. Why should I? As long as I don't make mistakes, no one has anything to say. But then I am a fool and do not

matter."—"I shouldn't have thought you were a fool, Mr. Wilcox."—"Oh! yes, but not a damned fool. We must get in that rehearsal before next Saturday. I was a fool last night and I can't be too sorry about it. I ought to have remembered who you are and that I am so much older than you."—"But I don't mind a bit," protested Jamie, "truly I don't. I'm not going to shout it from the house-tops of course. And as for you being a fool, Mr. Wilcox, well—you shine when I compare you with my uncle. Indeed I think you have something like genius."

Mr. Wilcox brought his fist down on his desk and tilted back his stool. "Well, I'm hanged," he cried, "if you haven't hit what I've been thinking these last ten years. But if he's the fool and I'm the genius why is he where he is and why am I the quill-driver?"

"Indeed, Mr. Wilcox," replied Jamie, "I don't know, but I should like to know."

"For one thing"—Mr. Wilcox let his stool fall back —"for one thing he's impressive and I'm not. But you mustn't call me Mr. Wilcox. Call me Sammy."

"I would be glad if you would call me Jamie."

"We must have a drink on this," said Mr. Wilcox, "and you shall write an Ode to Friendship."

They shook hands and on that Peter Leslie came in with an open ledger in his arms. He looked his most primly severe at the two. Mr. Wilcox had reached out for his hat.

"Going out, Mr. Wilcox?"

"Call of nature, Mr. Leslie, call of nature."

"There is a slight mistake somewhere. I can't trace a reply of ours. We must stay until it is put straight."

"Is it my mistake?"

"It is a mistake for which the room is responsible."

"O cursed spite, that ever I was born to put it right. I'll be back soon."

Mr. Wilcox hurried Jamie away to the Blue Boar where in good ale, hurriedly, they pledged their friendship.—"After the holidays," said Jamie, "I shall be able to ask you to come and see me. I am leaving the Leslies and my mother is coming to live with me."—"Don't you make no mistake, young feller my lad, I'm not the sort of friend you ask to see your Ma. Is she old Andrew's sister?"—"Yes."—"Ah! that accounts for a good deal, that does. No. You must understand that. I'm no good at Ma's. I am a man's man-friend, I am. I must get back to Peterkin. He's a Ma if you like. Every year or so he used to come down to the office and say: 'Another boy,' or 'A girl this time,' and I used to chip him and say: 'But you haven't been away.' He never saw the joke. Hu! hu."—Jamie did not see it either and stood trying to puzzle it out while Mr. Wilcox paid for the drink, reminded him that he must come for rehearsal before the Saturday and hurried away.—Very slowly Jamie walked out into the street: "You haven't been away. Why should he have been away, unless Mrs. Leslie were very ill? Even so she would have had someone looking after her, a nurse or a doctor." Then he fell to puzzling out the implied resemblance between Peter Leslie and his mother.—He was distressed. The humour of Mr. Wilcox had estranged him, almost carried him over to the army of alien persons headed by Moon-face. By way of reclaiming him Jamie began to revolve in his mind the composition of the suggested Ode to Friendship. He got as far as "Bond of souls desirous of——" Of what? Truth?—Youth—Ruth—Sooth—Love? Above—Dove—Prove—Cove—Knowledge? College. And what led back to the image of

Mary sitting by the window in the little house in Kirkcudbright drumming out syllables with her fingers. He became desperately home-sick, was frightened of the streets and the noise, the huge buildings. In desperation he ran back to the warehouse and plunged into work, saying to himself: "I do understand it, I do, I do. It is very wonderful and I like it." Yet behind this desperation were words:—"He that hath no friend is not, One half a man, I'd rather be a friendly sot, Than mar the plan, Great Nature made in giving hearts, To be endued with human arts."—He would not admit the verse-form, but stuck to it that in checking figures relating to bales of cloth, he was learning the business and assisting his uncle to create the future of England.

CHAPTER VIII

TIBBY M'PHAIL

THE young Leslies always said that their mother could see through walls and hear a pin drop in the next street, and Jamie often felt that she knew more about him than he knew himself. He was not altogether surprised therefore when she warned him against Mr. Wilcox, in spite of the care he had taken to conceal the evenings spent with that worthy, and the performance at the Gentlemen's Concert Hall, Mr. Wilcox had taught him to smoke and introduced him to his own brand of tobacco.

"He, he, Mr. Lawrie," said Mrs. Leslie one night when Peter was late at the office. "I'm sorry you've taken to smoking. I have made my own boys promise me that they will not touch tobacco until they are twenty-one."

Jamie blushed. "I just thought I'd try it," he replied. Against Mrs. Leslie he could never keep up his manly dignity for long. She did not mince matters. "It's a nasty dirty habit," she said, "and it runs away with a terrible lot of money, which reminds me that you want a pair of new boots. I couldn't let you go back to your mamma with your feet worn out as they will be if you wear those boots much longer." And she pursued the subject until she had forced Jamie into the confession that he had no money put by whatever and could not

afford a new pair of boots for at least a month.—"Money does fly," said Mrs. Leslie, "but it oughtn't to, you know, when you have no one else to spend it on. It isn't my place to say anything, I know, but Mr. Leslie is Scotch too and he really has been very worried over your seeing so much of Mr. Wilcox."—"I like Mr. Wilcox."—"Oh, yes, so do I, but he *is* such a bachelor, now isn't he? And Mr. Leslie was quite proud of being chosen to have you in his house, Mr. Lawrie, and you know you haven't been to church for weeks and weeks."—"But really, Mrs. Leslie, when I say I like Mr. Wilcox it doesn't mean that I like everything he does and says. Believe me, Mr. Wilcox does not set himself up as a model."—"Oh, you dear boy!" Mrs. Leslie flung her arms round his neck and kissed him. "Of course I know you would never come to any harm, but Mr. Leslie has been worried and I thought I had better say something. I haven't been very horrid, have I?"—That was how she always ended with her children when she had to give them the winnowing words made necessary by the growing menace in her husband.—"It's always better to have it out, don't you think?" she added. And Jamie, holding her hand and marvelling how young she looked, replied: "I would hate to have anything in my life which I would have to keep back from you."—"I must kiss you again for that. Oh, I do hope my own boys will feel the same about me. I shall be truly sorry when your mamma comes and takes you away from me, though I am dying to meet her, for she must be a wonderful woman."—"She is that."—"I hope you will live near."—"I would like it. I prefer this part of Thrigsby to any other."—"So do I. It is really quite genteel if it weren't so near the synagogue and the prison."

So they rattled on, Jamie delighted to have done with

concealment and deception, Mrs. Leslie rejoicing to have her sinner, if not repentant, at least frank. He promised her he would have a pair of new boots before he went home for his holidays, and, by seeing Mr. Wilcox only once or twice a week, he contrived it.

He applied himself more diligently to his work and went on 'Change with Mr. Clulow and marvelled at the crowds of men standing for hours apparently only to discuss politics or racing, with business somehow being done among them. Mr. Clulow was very kind and explained something of the mystery of prices and futures and Jamie began to feel that somehow the office also was romantic and interesting and he found Mr. Wilcox's contempt of it all rather irritating.—With Bell he went over to Liverpool one day and saw the ships loading and unloading. He loved that. It made him feel that the world was wide and yet that his place in it was important. It was all very well for Mr. Wilcox to talk of liberty. What dearer liberty was there than the feeling he had then as he stood watching the ships in the wide river, the ships by the wharfs, the ships coming and going, not for a mere childish joy, but with a purpose? He almost forgot that he was a Scotsman and came near to admitting that there was something in England, something in Thrigsby after all.—And so there is; the noble effort in the conquest of mankind by man.—Ships were ever after that the symbol of liberty, the emblem of the free toiling spirit. He was lifted out of himself, and knew that his feeling was genuine, because when he sought for words to describe it he was shamed into silence.

However, his habit of fishing words out of his emotions had its revenge and drove him on to the composition of a new cycle of Selina poems. These she found.

They pleased her and she set herself to please him. With the result that he went to church, took a walk with her after evening service, declared his love for her and kissed her.—"Shall I speak to your mamma about it?"—"Don't be silly," said Selina.—So the affair was clandestine and for a few weeks its folly provided a pleasurable warmth. When Jamie left on his holidays they had a magnificent parting.—"Every night," said Jamie, "I shall think of you and compose a poem."—"Every night," said Selina, "I shall think of you and keep a rose under my pillow."—"When I am rich," said Jamie, "I will retire and we will live in Scotland." So saying, he handed her a copy of the poems of Robert Burns. She opened it at "The Lass That Made the Bed to Me" and slapped the pages to with a blush and a stifled giggle. The colour in her pale cheeks made her enchanting. "Poor Burns!" sighed Jamie. "Poor Robin! He would have loved you."—Selina could not contain herself and her giggle broke into laughter. "Oh, Jamie," she said, "you would be such a darling if you were an English boy, but when you are so Scotch you remind me so terribly of papa."

They could keep it up no longer, and though they kissed, their kisses were frank and friendly, those of a healthy young man and woman happy to find that they no longer need persuade themselves that they love each other. Selina was already so like her mother and never could she be a figure of romance. However, Jamie's obstinate curiosity would not let her fade away. "I did love her," he insisted. "Ah! but when I kissed her, I loved her no longer. I loved the budding woman in her; the wild rose. Ech! but how soon she turned to a hip or a haw! She'll never read my Burns. How would she know what hirpling is, or a byke, or a dowie? She

might ask her dud of a father but he's no Scot. He's more English than the English."—But he was sad to let her go, sad as he sailed from Liverpool and watched the lights of the town go down into the sea. "I'll no' be young again," he thought. "I've my mother to think on and I must be wary or Tom will beat me. I wouldna like it if Tom were to be the first to buy my mother a jewel, and poor wee Maggie her wig, and, fine, if I'm to live among the English I must do as the English do."

It was grand to be in Scotland again, to talk his own language and clearly and easily to hear what others were saying. It was good to be away from the streets and the houses and to come back to the hills, to be driving over the moors, to recognise the shapes of the earth and the places, the very trees among which he had been born. Tom had walked out five miles to meet his brother. Jamie gave a halloo as he recognised Tom plodding up the road. Down he jumped from the carrier's cart and would have hugged his brother but that Tom stiffly held out his hand. Jamie wrung it; "Dod, lad!" he cried, "good man, Tom! Why you're near as tall as I!"—"I'll be taller yet," said Tom. "But I'm not going to walk back. Have you the money to pay John Carrier the fare?"—"I have that," says Jamie, and up they got.—"How's mother?" says Jamie.—"She's well," says Tom. "And Maggie?"—"She's well," says Tom and not another word could Jamie get out of him. —"You'll do fine for Thrigsby," said Jamie after a long silence.—"Will I?"—"Aye. They're that fond o' silence ye can go for a month and never speak to a soul, if you've a mind to."—"Aye. You've got fine clothes, Jamie."—"Dod, you should see the clothes that Uncle Andrew wears. The big pin in his tie and the great gold chain like a ship's cable across his belly. Liver-

pool's a fine place and I'd liefer be there than Thrigsby." —"Would you so?"—"I would."

Tom was infernally discouraging. More difficult than ever. He was shy and gawky; a boy still; and Jamie felt such a man, coming home, the first to have ventured forth, like a pioneer, to spy out the land. Tom was taking him too much for granted; Jamie admitted and was surprised at the change in him and he expected surprise, even admiration, in return. However, he was so happy and felt so big that he did not entertain his disappointment long, but, to fend off his brother's dourness, began to sing, songs he had learned from Mr. Wilcox, coarse humorous parodies of the ditties of the moment. Tom pulled a longer and longer face and was not amused. At last he said: "I'm thinking there must be a deal of wickedness in Thrigsby."—"Aye," said Jamie, exasperated. "There's never a week but the Mayor and Corporation go home rolling, and there are halls where they have French women dancing nightly." —"Is that so?" asked Tom.—"Aye, and the Town Clerk has a mistress from the Malays as brown as Uncle Shiel's mare, Blayberry."—"Good laud!" Tom looked frightened. "What like o' man is Uncle Andrew?"—"Why, Tom, when I think of it, he's the spit of you."—"Is that so?" Tom drew himself up and looked down his nose and seemed very pleased with himself. Jamie laughed and said: "It's blethers I was telling you. They're as quiet and God-fearing in Thrigsby as in Kirkcudbright and not near so drucken. And it was not often I saw Uncle Andrew and I'm glad to be home again."

They were within sight of the Solway now, chopping down the long road. A clear day, blue shone the water, blue the Cumberland hills beyond, yellow and grey the

houses and towers of the town.—"I would like Thrigsby better," said Jamie, "if you could see yon hills from it."—"Romantical nonsense," growled Tom. "What do you want with hills if you're making a position for yourself?"—"At least," protested Jamie, "at least let me be glad to see them again."—"What like," asked Tom, "are the men in the office? Are they clever men?"—"Oh, damn the office!"

The carrier's cart stopped with a creak and a jolt at the inn and down the brothers got. Jamie felt bigger than ever. The town had shrunk so: the streets were so short and from nearly all either the sea or the green country could be seen. And there was hardly a face he did not know, hardly a face that did not light up with interest to see him, so fine in his English clothes.—"You go on, Tom, and tell them I'm coming."—"For why?"—"I've a mind to make an entrance."—"Like a damned play-actor?"—"I thought it would be fine and exciting for mother."—"Blethers," cried Tom. "She'd despise you for it." Jamie winced and was humbled and became almost afraid of the meeting with his mother.

She was sitting in her best black silk and her finest mutch, and had only just composed herself in her chair with her hands in her lap. The curtains of the window were disturbed:—"Gorm," thought Jamie, "it's she who's play-acting." And he went up to her and embraced her. She accepted his caress with dignity but did not return it and his thoughts flew to Mrs. Leslie and her almost childish impulsiveness. But the smell of the peat fire was so good, there was such a splendid display of Scots dainties on the table; it was the home he had been longing for; the furniture he had known all his life; his father's portrait hanging above the chimney-piece; the family Bible in the window; nothing in all his time away had

been one half so pleasant. They might be swelling trade in England, but had they such homes? Could there be such honest poverty? He looked round with such pride and happiness that his mother took his hand and patted it:—"They've not spoiled you for us, Jamie."—"Spoil?" he cried. "It's we'll spoil them. They're an ignorant lot, and sinful."—"Aye," said Tom. "Jamie says they're all fools in the office."—"Ye should not be puffed up with the weakness of others," said Margaret gently.—"I'm not puffed," protested Jamie, "but when I look round here I see what I have not seen this long time and I thank God for John Knox. And what's the news?"

"We have a new doctor, an Edinburgh man, who knows some of these professors and philosophers Mary is so full of. Farquharson the tailor has written a book, printed and published in London no less. There's been small-pox in the town and Dr. M'Phail, who came in to help with it, took it and died, poor soul. But God has taken him for his good works. I made a promise that I would take his poor nameless child and care for her."

"Which?" asked Tom.

"Who should it be but Tibby? The rest have good mothers. I would not have her before, but Maggie's old enough now and we needed help in the house."

"And will she come with us to Thrigsby?" asked Jamie.

"She will. And that's all my news."

"Tell me, has Maggie got her wig yet?"

"She has not, but it is making."

There came into the room a thin shy little figure, a girl of seventeen with a strange ugly face. She had a nose so jutting and so rugged that, though it was of no great size, it seemed too large for her face, and yet her chin, long and pointed, was almost as self-assertive.

Yet the length of it told for nothing, so long was her face surmounted with a round and also assertive forehead. And behind these remarkable features glimmered pale shy eyes, full of the most timid and beautiful tenderness. Jamie rose to his feet and stood staring down at her. She fixed her eyes on Margaret. She was dressed in a plain cotton frock that clung about her and showed the young, strong figure of her. Her hair was cut short at the neck, and being very thick, stuck out rebelliously, assertively, in protest.

"Was it four red herrings and six fresh I had to buy or four fresh and six red?" she asked.

"It was four fresh and six red," said Margaret without looking at her.

"Thank you." As she turned her eyes shyly took in Jamie's tall figure. Her eyes met his and she seemed to shrink away into herself and Jamie felt something go click inside him so that he was alarmed, and jerked his head up, partly in surprise, partly by way of asserting himself. He had come to think he was familiar with all his symptoms in the presence of woman.

"Was that Tibby?" he asked.

"Aye," said Tom, "that's Tibby. D'ye think she tokens the Doctor?"

"I don't know,' replied Jamie. "I don't know whether to laugh or to cry."

"She's no beauty," said Tom, "that's certain."

"There's no telling," asserted Jamie loftily, "what a girl will be." And he felt that he was defending Tibby and was pleased to feel so.

Maggie and John came in on that. Maggie meek and shy, John lumpish and boisterous. Poor Maggie with her bonnet over the kind of mutch she had to wear!

She flung her arms round her brother's neck and said he must promise never, never to look at her.—"And why not?" asked Jamie. "It would never be your appearance I would see, but the little Lawrie soul in you."

And John chanted: "Oh! ain't we a wonderful familee?"

Then they made Jamie tell of his life in Thrigsby and the riches and power of it, and he described Andrew Keith's great mansion, and the great mansion the Greigs had, and the carriages and servants, and what the Mayor looked like, and how enormous the warehouse was; and he made them roar with laughter with tales of Mr. Leslie diving under the table after crumbs and of Mr. Wilcox reciting in the office, and the clerks running and scurrying when Andrew Keith sent for them or came through the rooms.

"And d'ye have to be just one with them?" asked Tom.

"Aye," said Jamie. "It takes a bit to laugh at their jokes, but you get used to that."

"I would never laugh if I were not amused," said Tom.

And at last the subject of Maggie's wig cropped up. Jamie wished to know if it was to be very costly. "Not," said his mother, "so costly as we thought it was going to be." Maggie looked nervous and ashamed, and Tom stole a glance round to the door. "Ye know," he said, "Tibby had a magnificent head of hair and near Maggie's colour." Maggie burst into tears: Mrs. Lawrie cried: "Tom!" and Jamie thrust his hands into his pockets and set his chin as he always did when his emotions baffled him. He could not restrain himself. "I'm danged!" he roared: "I'm danged if you aren't the

meanest lot!"—"Jamie!" cried his mother, and Maggie wept and through her sobs stammered out: "Oh, Jamie! and Tibby said you were such a fine figure of a man!"

CHAPTER IX

THE DESCENT UPON THRIGSBY

HALF the holiday was spent in living down that explosion: the other half in preparing for the journey of family and possessions by road and rail. For three days the old policy of silence was adopted. Tibby had her meals with the family and Jamie, ignored by the rest, would address his few remarks to her, receiving only "Yes" and "No" for answer. No one else spoke to Tibby, who would keep her eyes fixed on Margaret's face in the pathetic effort to anticipate her desires. It was easy to see that she was frightened, and she was very uneasy when at last the silence was broken and Tom took to levelling heavy sarcasms at his brother, whom he called "the philosopher."—"Isn't it called ethics, the philosophy of conduct?"—"It is."—"There'll be more talk of that in Edinburgh than in Thrigsby, I'm thinking."—"No doubt."—"Ye'll like us better when we've all been dipped in Thrigsby."—"Dipped," retorted Jamie, "is the word, for ye're all sheep."—"So!" cried Tom in a white fury, "it's sheep now! It was pigs lang syne."—Then Margaret asserted her authority: "Tom, be silent." And Jamie slipped away.

He would spend his days with the dominie or going from house to house, and shop to office, hunting up old acquaintances and schoolmates, or he would walk out

into the country or along the shore with the happy company of his budding thoughts. One day he walked out to the kirk which had been his father's and brooded among the graves of the Keiths; and he saw Doctor M'Phail's house standing empty and the death of that man seemed to bring home to him his responsibility for himself, for his own life. He visited his Uncle Shiel and they talked about the Doctor, what a man he had been, what a rich character, filling the whole countryside with his strong generosity. "No wonder," said Uncle Shiel, "the women loved him, for he could make the heart in me as soft as the heart of a woman, and I'm tough. And how did you find Andrew?"—"That," said Jamie, "is what I didn't find. There was the outside of the man, his great house and his business, but the man himself——" Uncle Shiel chuckled: "He was the eldest of us and mysterious and secret. Losh! I used to go in greater awe of him than of my father, and your mother was just his slave. I'm only surprised he has not done better, for he could make almost any man take him for a wonder. But perhaps the English are not so easily deceived."—"The English," replied Jamie, "seem to like a man who can laugh."—"Deed then," said Uncle Shiel, " 'tis a pity it was not me went among them and not Andrew. Remember, laddie, that when you're weary of riches and all that ye can come to your Uncle Shiel and snare a rabbit and tickle trout as you used to do."—"I might do worse," mused Jamie, "than come to live on the farm."—"That would not suit your mother. She's ay girding at me for being and staying a humble man."

It was growing late and Jamie had to put his best leg formost to reach home before dark. There was a mist and the sun set red over the hills. A mile or so out of the town by a bridge over a burn he met Tibby. She

had seen him coming, turned and walked swiftly away. He caught up with her crying:

"Tibby! Tibby M'Phail!"

She turned on him and said:

"My name's Tibby. I have no other."

"I've been seeing the Doctor's house to-day."

"He was the best man that ever lived."

"So my Uncle Shiel was saying. Have you been walking, Tibby?"

"I have."

"Do you always walk this way?"

"I do."

"I can guess why."

She made no answer, only walked a little quicker.

"I hope you'll be happy with us, Tibby. Eh! But you're a grand walker!"

"I hope I know my duty, Mr. James, wherever I go."

"But I meant—really happy."

She stopped and said: "Will you walk on, Mr. James?"

He stood still and tried in vain to catch her glance.

"If I've said anything to hurt you, I'm sorry. I've been sorry ever since——"

"Let me be, Mr. James, and walk on, please. They——"

"Ah! What have they done to you now?"

"Please, please—I'll run—I'll run away if you will not leave me be." And tears began to flow down her cheeks.

"You poor child!" cried Jamie and he took her in his arms and kissed her, tenderly, pityingly on the lips. She was passive, accepted the caress, the tenderness, the pity, and when he loosed her stood with the tears still flowing. She would neither move nor speak. He could say nothing and at last he swept his hat from his head, bowed

low and walked away, beginning to understand why she must be left alone and to feel ashamed of his strained relations with his family. She must be left alone with her grief and nothing must break in upon it. "If my father had lived!" thought Jamie. "The Doctor loved him, and mother too. He was friends with mother." And he found that all his rancour had vanished.—He walked briskly home. In the street at the entrance to the town he found a horseshoe. Dandling this in his hand, he burst in on his mother crying: "Here's luck, mother. We'll hang it over the door at the new house." —"Over the door?" said she. "Why, Thrigsby'll think us daft."—"They're not such gossips as they are here. Thrigsby's not a place where everybody knows everybody. However, if you'd not have it over the door I'll give it to Maggie and she shall hang it over her bed, to bring a handsome husband and great riches."—"Poor Maggie!" sighed Margaret. "She won't have much thought of husbands with that head of hers."—"I'm sorry I was hasty about that."—"Ah! Jamie, that temper of yours will be your ruin. I was hoping it would be gone by you're a grown man."—He protested: "But it wasn't the same, mother. It was only that I cannot thole injustice."—"And that makes you unjust," said she. Her logic startled and shocked him: "Dod, mother," he said. "You are a one to turn a man back on himself.—"Aye," said Margaret calmly, pulling back the widow's bands at her wrists, "and why for not?" Her face, her whole manner was pugnacious and Jamie, smiling down at her, muttered: "You'd make a bonny fighter, mother."—"The Lord be thanked," said Margaret, "I have held my own."

Indeed she looked indomitable with her wide thin-lipped mouth, her almost startled-looking alert eyes, her

blunt nose wide at the nostrils, her iron-grey hair parted and neatly smoothed down under her mutch. Jamie could remember her riding miles in the rain to fetch a remote shepherd, who had become lax, to the kirk, and he thought: "She'll be lost in Thrigsby." He said aloud: "Well, I hope you'll be pleased with us, mother." —"Indeed," she said, "I will," and that seemed to settle it. There were to be no two ways about it. Jamie felt constrained to prepare her for any possible disappointment and, after giving her time to roll her resolution round her tongue, he said: "You'll be surprised how quietly things are in Thrigsby. You'll think the English lazy, as I did."—"All the more reasons for my sons to work. It was work raised the Keiths up. The first that went worked often with their own hands. My Aunt Ann did, at the weaving, with her own hands, though she would never have stooped to such a thing here in Scotland where she was known."—"It's got beyond hands now," said Jamie. "Aye," returned she. "It's got to brains now, and brains you have."—"As to that," interrupted Jamie, "I'm not so certain. I often feel as if my brains had holes in them like a cullender." —"Aye," said Margaret, "it's a pity that Mary has the best brains of the family, but she has small sense."— "Oh, well," said Jamie. "We are what we are and we must hold together."

So the peace was made. Tom discarded his heavy sarcasms and at meals even Tibby was drawn into the conversation and partook of the general excitement, which even in herself Margaret could not altogether subdue, though every night, by way of reminding her children that they were in the Lord's hands, she read whole chapters from the Old Testament and improvised elo-

quent prayers for her children in turn, with a little one thrown in at the end for Tibby.

The wee house was slowly dismantled and the furniture packed up, all except the beds and the kitchen table sent away, and then into its emptiness the minister was brought to call down a blessing upon its departing inmates. In Thrigsby Jamie had never felt so near God as he did in Scotland and the minister's miserable intimacy was at first rather a shock to him, but he quickly slid back into the condition of his youth when at every fervent mention of the wrath of the Deity he shivered and quailed internally and felt that the divine Eye, Cyclopean, was upon him: and when the minister lifted up his voice and brayed of the perils and snares and dangers lying in wait for the voyagers then he felt that it was indeed a sin to break up the wee house and he thought that perhaps they would have done better to hold by their honest poverty in their native land than to pursue the success of their kinsfolk amongst foreigners. He sighed when the last *Amen* went ringing through the house and almost laughed when Tom, with his eye on the minister, got in another *Amen* as the rest were rising from their knees.—"Give the minister a drop of whisky, Tom," said Margaret.—"Nae, thank you! Nae, thank you," said the minister.—"Just to drink our healths," protested Margaret.—"A weel!" He took his drop. "God's blessing on the house and on the new house and may ye be appreciated as ye have been here, Mrs. Lawrie."—"I have been only too aware of my shortcomings," said Margaret.—"Might we all be that," responded the minister, reaching out for his hat. He shook hands all round: "Ye'll be good God-fearing lads and a credit to your mother and Scotland."—"God bless Scotland," thought Jamie, and "That I will," said Tom.

Thus the journey was consecrated and on the morrow they all drove in the carrier's cart across the border over to Carlisle. It was a sweet, sad September day with a soft light on the Cumberland hills as they drove towards them.—"Helvellyn, Scawfell and Skiddaw," said Jamie, "one for Tom and one for John and one for me. The three highest points in England."—"That's right, Jamie," said his mother. "Aim at the highest."—"Aye," thought he, "a sight higher than she knows." He turned to Tibby:—"This is England, Tibby. How do you like it?"—"I see no difference yet," she replied and at that they all laughed and she, thinking they were laughing at her, withdrew into herself and could not be induced to say another word.

John had marked out a little hog-backed hill. "I'm thinking," he said, "that yon'll be high enough for me, yet awhile."—"It was in yon hills," said Tom, "that Mary used to say she would one day have her house. It was reading Wordsworth made her say that. Her head's turned with Goethe now, so maybe it's Germany."—"Good laud!" cried Jamie, exasperated with the sneer in his brother's voice. "What's poetry to do with where you live or how? 'Tis the living breath of a man and as free as air."—"Don't wrangle, boys," said Margaret, "and, Jamie, the Bible is poetry enough for any man especially a minister's son."—Jamie treasured that saying. It marked for him the point at which some queer essence in himself left her and would not be subdued in his affection for her.

At Carlisle they had some hours to wait for the train. They visited the castle and the cathedral and then waited in the station sitting by their furniture which had arrived safely and was piled up on the platform. They sat for nearly an hour until the train came in. None but Jamie

had seen such a thing before though all had seen pictures of locomotives. They gaped and Maggie screamed through the roar and clatter of the engine: "Oh! Jamie! I've left the horseshoe with John Carrier. Oh! I'm that sorry! Oh! our luck will be out!"—"Havers!" said Tom. "Speak for yourself. My luck's in and I'll not be losing it with any bit of old iron."—But Tibby was discovered to have a parcel in her lap and in it was the horseshoe. Maggie clutched it from her and never again relinquished it.

Jamie and Tom waited to see every piece of furniture and every box put on the train and then they climbed up into the bare hutch which was a third-class compartment. They had oatcake, scones, cheese, cold porridge and whisky with them and had several meals to while away the long hours during which they jogged on through the closing day. They were excited to see the tall chimneys and the gear of the collieries and when they stopped at Wigan Margaret said: "It was near here that the Keiths had their first mill."—"I wish," said Tom, "I had been the first. I would by now be the richest man in Lancashire."—And Jamie saw Tibby smile.

It was dark when they reached Thrigsby, near midnight when they entered 21 Murray Street, which Andrew had ordered Mr. Leslie to take for them.—Maggie had been saying during the last stages of the journey: "Will Uncle Andrew send his carriage for us?"—"I've no doubt he will," was Margaret's reply. But there was no carriage and no one to meet them. Only at the new house there were fires lit and the beds were put to air and in Margaret's room were dahlias in a glass jar. Jamie guessed that Mrs. Leslie had put them there, but he said nothing when his mother said how nice it was of Andrew to send them. She was put out when she discovered

that the house was one of a row of eight and was overlooked back and front. "I hope," she said, "I hope we shall have nice neighbours. But your uncle is sure to have inquired into that."—"You need not know them," said Jamie, sitting on her bed after she had slipped into it. "But I would like," she said, "at least to know all about them."—He remembered then that though he had lived above a year with the Leslies he knew almost nothing about the people who lived on either side of them. The family adventure seemed to him then rather forlorn, but he put a brave face on it and said: "Trust the Lawries to make their mark, mother." She replied, turning her face to the wall, "I put my trust in the Lord." Jamie realised that she was childishly disappointed and suddenly he felt immeasurably older than she, and more responsible for her even than for poor Maggie.

CHAPTER X

MAKING PLANS

IT was some days before Andrew gave any sign and then he wrote a stiff little note of welcome saying that he would give himself the pleasure of calling on the following Saturday afternoon. Tom and John were hard at it making the house ready against his coming and in the evenings Jamie took his coat off and walked about with a hammer in his hand and nails between his teeth. The house was roomy, large enough to provide a separate bedroom for each member of the family and an attic for Tibby. She had no possessions and was very proud and pleased when Jamie gave her two pictures to hang on her walls; more than that he hung them for her himself. As in Scotland they had had only one living-room there was hardly any furniture for the parlour. In the dining-room the furniture was arranged exactly as it had been in the old house. The portrait of the Reverend T. Lawrie was hung above the mantelpiece and the family Bible was placed in the window. In this room also the books of the family were shelved, except for Tom's which he insisted on having in his bedroom.

On the Saturday Andrew arrived in his carriage and pair, and the neighbours' windows were crowded with faces to look at him. Jamie received him and presented "my brother, Tom" and "my brother, John." Maggie

was overcome with shyness and refused to appear. She was afraid of disgracing the family with her head, though her wig was almost a masterpiece and only the closest scrutiny could detect it. Margaret was upstairs composing her nerves and her thoughts, for she meant to have it out with Andrew and had given her sons a hint that they must disappear. She sailed in presently just when Andrew's grunts and snorts had reduced even Tom, who in his desire to make an impression had maintained conversation with an ingenuity and resource that to Jamie seemed nothing short of miraculous. Planting herself in front of her brother, she forced him to rise and kiss her. He did so awkwardly and grunted as he sank into his chair again:—"Well, Maggie," he said, "you're lucky with your three fine sons."—"Aye," she said, "they're Keiths as well as Lawries."—Andrew pointed to Tom: "That's the Keith," he said—and Tom gave a feeble little grunt in imitation of his uncle.—"You like your house?" asked Andrew. "It's a bigger house than I had when I first started housekeeping."—"But you had no family, Andrew," said Margaret." "I have no family now," replied Andrew, "and yet I have a bigger house than the Greigs."—"Ah!" said Jamie, "but that is for your position."—Andrew quelled him with a look: "It is because I like a big house," he said. And Jamie almost pointedly left the room.

John followed him in a moment. Andrew called Tom as he moved and said to him:

"So you're to come to my office?"

"Yes indeed, Uncle."

"Well, we'll see what room can be made for you, and then you must make room for yourself, eh?"

"Oh, yes, Uncle. Is there any book on the trade I could read?"

"There is my own book."

"Could I read that?"

"I'll send you a copy with my autograph."

"Oh, thank you, Uncle!"

Tom thought it time to retire on that and went for a walk to ease his jubilation. When he had gone, Andrew said:—"You've done well, Margaret, though you would have no help from us."—"It has been hard," said she, "but I would do the same again. I'm not asking help now. I've brought up my sons and I'm offering them to the family."—Andrew gave something that sounded like a chuckle, a cluck in his throat: "There's two sides to a bargain. They've got to prove themselves. We can get clerks here as plentiful as blackberries."—"They'll make their way with or without you," chimed Margaret, settling her hands in her lap. "But I would prefer it to be with you to keep them in the family though their name *is* Lawrie."—"They shall have their start," said Andrew. "Jamie shall go now to the mills. He might make a good manager. Tom shall begin under my own confidential clerk. And for the boy he'll be the better of another year's schooling. There's a good Grammar School here, good and cheap. His brothers will easily be able to afford his fees."—"I'm much obliged to you, Andrew."—"Oh, I'm brotherly, brotherly." So saying, he rose, kissed her and walked out, she calling to John to take his uncle to his carriage. John did so. Andrew extended his fingers. John did likewise and their fingers crossed like swords.—"Gee," said John as he walked up the path after the carriage had driven off: "I've done for mysel'." He had, and was glad of it.

He returned to Jamie and said: "Well, *he's* a disappointment."—"What did you expect?" asked Jamie.—"Something grand and lordly. You were grand and

lordly when you came back and I thought you must hae got it from him."—"Oh! Johnny, Johnny, a lordly man must have a soul."—"I could see he made you miserable as soon as he arrived. But didn't our Tom make up to him fine? Our Tom'll have the best of him yet."

When Tom returned Margaret informed her sons of the destinies marked out for them, and John only expressed rebellion: "School!" he cried. "Have I come all these miles to go to school again?"—"You're young yet," answered Margaret, "and it's a good school."—"But I'll be living on you and my brothers!" cried John, unable to express or indeed to understand his real grievance, which was that he had expected to walk out of the railway station into manhood.—"You must not be ungrateful. It is your uncle's wish, and after all you have me to thank that you are not now in an English charity school with yellow legs and a round blue bonnet like Edward VI."—"Very well, mother, but I will not learn the Greek and if they try to put me to the mathematics I'll turn on my doll-face. They won't do much with that."—"Don't be a young fool," chimed in Tom heavily. "You'll have to learn what the others learn."—But John was not to be squashed: "Jamie's eldest. If I do what anybody tells me it'll be Jamie shall tell it."—"It's school for a while, anyhow," said Jamie and John bowed to his decision.

Both Margaret and Tom kept silent as to Tom's future. Margaret told Jamie how his uncle had said he would one day be a manager. Jamie was not elated at the proposal. "The mills are at Hyde Bridge. If I was a manager I would have to live there. It's a dark hole. I won't relish going out there by train every morning neither. I'll have to be up early and back late."—"But you'll have a good practical knowledge," said Tom. "You

might even invent some new bit of machinery or a new process would make your fortune or at least put the firm under an obligation to you. That's how partners are made. It's easy to see that Uncle knows how quick you are, the way he moves you about."—Jamie smiled: "That's one way of looking at it and I suppose we can't have things altogether to our liking." But he was disappointed and hurt. He had been buoying himself up with the hope that on his return his uncle would send for him and, after his long probation, open up some definite prospect before him. He could not away with the feeling that in being sent to Hyde Bridge he was shelved. He had once or twice been to the mills and was left with the strong impression that the work there was on a different plane. The men in that little office were of a different class. The brains of the concern were in Thrigsby. The mill was only a machine. The idea of monotonous day by day production repelled him.—"The manager of a mill," said Tom, "would get a fine salary."—"There's more than salaries to be thought of," replied Jamie. "At least that's how it seems to me. If I'm Andrew Keith's nephew I'm not going to be his employee. My blood's his and I back my blood wi' my brains for to help him in his work."—"Ou aye," retorted Tom, "but the business is his and he has a say in that. Till you're as rich as he is you're not as good, and fine airs are out of place." —"I measure no man by his purse, least of all my kinsman," cried Jamie.—"It's early days," said Tom, "to talk of measuring men. You wait until they let ye. That'll be your job when you're a manager."—"At Hyde Bridge," said Jamie relapsing into gloom.

Margaret laughed at them both. "It's soon to be putting old heads on your young shoulders. Who's to tell what will happen? It is all in the Lord's hands.

And by the way what church did you attend? Presbyterian, I hope."—"There's not a Presbyterian church within three miles, but I went to the English church. S. James the Less I liked the best; but S. John's is the nearest. Mr. Leslie is churchwarden at S. James."—"Very well then, we will try S. James. Have they free seats?" "A few."—"I'll stick to the Scots Kirk," said Tom, "if I have to walk ten miles."

On the Sunday morning accordingly he walked three miles there and three miles back, with a good stiff dose of his native religion in the interval. Margaret, James, John and Maggie went to S. James the Less and there met the Leslies. Mrs. Leslie fluttered round Margaret and told her how happy she had been to have her big handsome son with her, and Peter, turning himself for the moment into the spokesman of the Anglo-Scots community, delivered a little speech of welcome. Selina meanwhile made herself very pleasant to Maggie and tried in vain to draw her out of her shyness. Poor Maggie had been very upset by the Anglican service, which had seemed to her trivial and perfunctory. Her greatest pleasure in life had been the Sabbath when she could quake before the Lord and imagine that at any moment the earth might open and swallow her up for her exceeding wickedness. The English performance had to her been hardly more exciting than an afternoon call. And she was more than a little inclined to regard Selina as frivolous, if not improper, because she was so gaily dressed. Selina knew that Jamie had returned and had got herself up in her best and brightest, but, with her eye on Margaret, hardly permitted herself to smile at him. John stared at her and Tom, who had come to meet them, stood dourly looking on at the group of Leslies and Lawries blocking the pathway for the crowd of

stovepipe-hatted gentlemen and full-skirted ladies as they came streaming out of church—"for all the world," thought Tom, who possessed an inward wit of his own, "like the animals coming out of the Ark."—Not such a bad simile either, for it was one of those genuine Thrigsby days when air and earth seem to be saturated with water, dirty water at that, and its pale inhabitants have the wan vacant stare of fish in an aquarium, with something also of their odd alacrity. Mr. Leslie knew almost everybody and had continually to be taking off his hat. —"He's like a pump," thought Tom. Very stiff and straight was Peter Leslie in his Sunday broadcloth and he had the air of saying to all the congregation: "I am talking to these people. They are to be known."—And indeed when at last the Lawries and the Leslies parted Mrs. Lawrie was the object of a friendly interest. Tom, lagging, heard whispers: "Scotch! Yes. Related to Keith Bros. & Stevenson."—"Really?" "Those boys are lucky, but the Scotch do always fall on their feet."—"The girl would be pretty if it weren't for something rigid about her."—"Proud? Oh, well, *I* should be proud if I had three sons like that. The eldest has such dignity, hasn't he?"—"They don't look at me," thought Tom, and his eyes followed Jamie's tall figure. "Oh, the moudiewarps! I don't wonder Uncle Andrew's rich."

Outside the church gate Selina managed to catch Jamie and with her prettiest smile she asked Mrs. Lawrie if he might accompany her home. She gave Jamie her Prayer Book to hold. It contained a note which he extracted and thrust into his waistcoat pocket. That also did not escape Tom and his thoughts coincided with his brother's:—"Aye, she'll do—for a manager's wife." The thought pleased Tom but not Jamie who was set in revolt by it, both against Selina and his apparent destiny.—"I'm

hanged if I'll be a manager," he said to himself. "And have done with this feckless philandering. I am not nor will I be in love." This resolution made him all the more polite to Selina who found him more attractive than ever since she had seen how in church he had drawn attention to himself.—"Did you have a pleasant holiday, Mr. Lawrie?" she asked. "It was excited and disturbing," replied Jamie, "but I was glad to see Scotland again."—"Is it very beautibul?"—"So beautiful that no one can describe it."—She smiled: "Did you—did you keep your promise?"—Jamie turned cold with fear. She was dragging him back into the foolish past. "I—I did not," he stammered. There were two girls walking up the street in front of them. He was overcome by the absurdity of their outline: little stiff bodies rising out of a semicircle of draperies. Love and—that? He became suddenly self-conscious and aware of his own incongruity, of the wild free impulse in his own heart, here in the wet, dull, greasy street. He could not bear it. He plucked the note out of his waistcoat, slipped it back into the Prayer Book, thrust that into Selina's hands, raised his hat and bolted. When he was out of sight he stopped. "Losh!" he said, "what must she think of me!"

He was crest-fallen and ashamed when he reached home. He had a miserable afternoon, for a number of ladies called and he was enraged to see their eyes taking in the furniture of the dining-room and his mother's raiment and Maggie's wig.—"Stare on! Stare on!" he raged. "We're like any other folk. Aye, that's my father over the chimney-piece and he was a good man though he was never in any city but Edinburgh."—"Yes," he heard his mother's voice saying, "yes, I think we are going to like Thrigsby, though we are hardly strangers to it for we have had relations here for generations now."

Or Tom booming: "A man's place is in the city now. Only a clod would till the soil."—(O! Uncle Shiel! Uncle Shiel!)—And the women's tongues were as busy as their eyes. They told Margaret where to get the best cakes, the best clothes, the best coffee, the best wine, the best shoes. They recommended butchers, bakers and milkmen.—Why should they not? Perhaps even Jamie would not have minded if he had not made such a fool of himself with Selina. Margaret was happy and contented. She was led on to talk of her husband and her long widowhood, though not of her poverty,—that was for ever interred. And Tom induced the ladies to talk of their husbands so that he might gauge what manner of society they had come among—clerks, managers, municipal servants.—"They'll do for a while," he thought.

Jamie was increasingly miserable until the ladies had gone. He hated himself for his reserve and his inability to break it down. All that evening he spent writing to his sister Mary with whom he had begun a regular correspondence.

CHAPTER XI

A LETTER FROM EDINBURGH

MARY was a born letter-writer. She could be frank, intimate and charming on paper as she could not be in actual relations in which she always acquiesced too much in her disadvantages of short stature and plain looks. She had two styles, both good, one official and literary: this she used for her general family epistles: the other easy, light and mocking which she used for her letters to Jamie. They came not regularly but as the spirit moved her, generally when she had got some new light on the world as it shaped itself before her. Her big brother, she knew, had need of her, and she was not going to let distance deprive her of the happiness of supplying it. His first weeks at the mill were desperate. He thought he would never be able to go on with it, but not a soul was allowed so much as a glimmer of the fury that blew in him like a hot wind. He was parched and cracked with it when there came a letter to say that she too was a little, ever so little, unhappy.

"It was grand at first" (she wrote) "to be in the streets where Sir Walter walked, to go past the house where he used to visit Marjorie Fleming. It was fine to meet people who had seen Sir Walter and some other (old) people who remembered poor Burns. But now Sir

Walter is a shadow and the little pride of the world fades before its great unhappiness. Who can walk through the streets of this great city unmoved by the hopeless misery and the drunkenness caused by the misery? You would think that the great rock standing there above the city would make for strength, but I think sometimes that no idea, no symbol, has any power against the effect human beings have on each other. That alarms and saddens me. If we could only realise it and know something about it.—But, dearie me, I'm being encouraging! I should rather talk of my pleasure and I would but that it lies all among thinking men, and is therefore just a little rarefied. You would be surprised at the amount of thinking that goes on in this town, the better parts of it, that is. It is as common as drunkennees in the lower quarters! O! a deal o' thinking! Uncle Andrew, no not the Queen of England couldn't buy it. It is a natural force like a current of air or a whirlpool and I, your wee sister, am caught up in it. There's a thing, though you may not know it, called the chemistry of the mind. It is going to do a deal for the world without interfering with religion. Scotland, little though we suspected it in the Glen Kens, is the centre of the world's thought. O! but we have great men here. There have not been greater since the Frenchmen of Paris and we too are to have our Encyclopædia. England must and shall be educated. Cheap too! I say we because I am to be in it. Just as Diderot made his Encyclopædia out of an English book so we are to make ours out of a German one. And I am learning German. Why not? There are Germans on the throne. It is a thoroughly respectable language and, they tell me, has a great literature. There are other poets beside our Shelley and our Wordsworth and our little Keats. But poetry they tell me

is mere *intuition.* All the *building* is done by philosophers. I don't profess to understand this yet and when I complain, as I do sometimes, B. laughs at me and asks how many people understand Newton and if I know where the world would be without him. Then I learn that it is something terribly *Mathematical* and, as you know, the Lawries never were any good at arithmetic. It is very exhilarating but it makes the ordinary world almost intolerable and, after all, as millions of people live in the ordinary world it can't be so very bad,—can it? Shall we call it so-so? Between the two I find—and it *is* such a comfort—my own dear brother. I like to think of him in the ordinary world though he is not and never could be so-so. Indeed, who can? And yet so-so describes the sum of it all.—England seems very remote. There are thinking minds there too but all separate and isolated. Here there is a school, another Athens. Alas! I know now that I shall never be a poetess. Scotland is not to have, this time, her Sappho. But you, I think, could write. Your descriptions of Thrigsby are sombre but not depressing. I suppose, as you say, that civilisation is marching through its streets, though I think you are a little hard when you say you wish it would knock some of them down. Surely the poor people regard themselves as better off in them or they would not go there. You know our philosophers will not hear of anything that goes against common-sense unless it can be mathematically proved—like the earth going round the sun, which is philosophy's one great smack in the eye for the So-soishness of things. Short of proof, however, we have no right to interfere, however indignant we may be.—You will have had all my eloquent descriptions of the beauties of Edinburgh in my family letters. In my letters to you I like to describe only the Inside of

Me, and I want in your letters the Inside of You at least more than just peeps in your account of things generally —I am glad Mother is so happy and so settled with plenty of people to make a fuss of her. She would get that anywhere.—Tom never writes to me. John's letters are amusing, but yours are You and I feel you growing into a wonderful beautiful MAN which I and the world would far rather have than all the philosophers that ever was. Rare! Only the world and women know how rare, and perhaps only the plain women really know. Write soon."

She had the effect of bracing Jamie up so that he could more easily bear the weight of circumstance and look about him with more kindliness. He was incapable of understanding many of the ideas with which she played and was left oddly jealous of philosophers in general and the shadowy figure which he divined behind her letters, though whether it was Professor B. or R. W. or K. L. he did not know. He inclined to think it must be Professor B. and Mary's growing insistence on her plainness made him furious with him for a conceited dolt. Mary, of all of them, ought not to be unhappy. She must not be. His eagerness to help her, if she should need help, set him working with keenness and vigour so that he was able almost to conquer his detestation of the mills. He told himself that it was absurd and unreasonable, that without the mills there would be no business, but he hated the long rooms with the machines clattering and the threads dancing, the shuttles bobbing, and the rows of women standing there for hours at a stretch, to gain so little. He was glad to escape in the evening and to read or write to Mary or, if it was his turn, to play backgammon with his mother. (He and Tom took it

in turn week by week.)—For many months after their arrival their existence was quiet, monotonous, uneventful, happy and solid. Jamie's imaginative and emotional life was away with Mary in Edinburgh.

CHAPTER XII

JOHN ASTONISHES THE FAMILY

SO absorbed was Jamie in his effortless acquiescence in this regular existence that he became rather absent-minded and hardly noticed what was happening around him. John was there and his mother was there and Tom was there and of their goings out and comings in he knew nothing at all. Tibby woke him up in the morning and had his breakfast ready. This he gulped down and then rushed off to catch the train before the others were stirring. John had home work to do in the evenings and Tom would often bring a ledger back with him and sit at work on it. Margaret had the tale of the day's doings but she was never able to make it interesting. It was almost as though the world outside Keith and Lawrie could not justify its existence and because it made no apparent effort to do so she bore a grudge against it. She was aggressive in talking even of her friends.

So little did Jamie notice what was happening that it was a week or so after the event before he noticed that Tibby no longer had her meals with them. He did not comment on her absence but one night, having occasion to go into the kitchen, he said:—"Why do you take your meals alone, Tibby?"—"It was my wish. It was not . . ."—"But I don't wish you to be a servant."—"I

am a servant, Jamie. Who does the work of the house but me?"—"But it doesn't seem right."—"It *is* right. I asked for wages."—"I'm sorry you did that. You had only to ask for any money you need."—"Indeed I would not ask. And it is not the same here as it was at home."—"How is it different?"—"It is different. I'm older for one thing and you are getting on so nicely, you and Mr. Tom. You'll take your position in the world and you can't have a half-and-half in the house."—"Your father and my father were friends."—"Aye," she said with her queer wistful humour, "but your mother and my mother were not."—That finished the argument.—"For your father's sake," said Jamie, "I can't altogether acquiesce in that. You shall be a servant if you insist on it, but you shall be a friend to me."—"I will that."—"Then why do you call me Jamie and my brother Mr. Tom?"—Tibby smiled: "He *is* Mr. Tom."—"How much are they paying you?"—"Six shillings a week."—"'Tis little."—"It's enough. I've no face to be vain of or to spend money on. I can save."—"Indeed," said Jamie. "I think you in Thrigsby are the most extraordinary of all."—"Watch out for yourself, Jamie," said she with a strange oracular gesture, so that her words seemed almost a warning or a prophecy.

She had shaken Jamie out of his musing so that he was prepared for the disturbance which soon came upon the household. One night he came home from Hyde Bridge, like Tom, with a ledger. He was not altogether satisfied with the way the books were kept and he disliked the manager whose chief assistant he had become, mainly, as he knew, through the man's obsequiousness and desire to flatter him as a nephew of the head of the firm. —"How you two boys do work!" sighed Margaret, thinking she was not going to have her game of back-

gammon.—"We'll have to work a deal harder before we've done, the way competition is springing up on all sides. I'm thinking Uncle Andrew must have had an easy time of it," said Tom.—"Oh, no," protested Margaret. "He had his hard work too."

John had come home without books.—"No work tonight?" said his mother. "You must learn to work too. Look at your brothers."

"I'll work all right," said John. "I've left school." He was very nervous and in his effort to put a bold front on it became rather impudent in tone.

"Left school?" cried Tom.

"Leastways I'm no' going back. I've found a post and I begin on Monday."

"The devil you do," said Tom. "And where? Has Uncle Andrew made you a buyer?"

"Uncle Andrew's not the only door I can knock on. I'm going to Murdoch's the ironmongery for ten shillings a week. Two of us is enough for Uncle Andrew's maw and I'm not going to make a third."

"Maybe," sneered Tom, "you are thinking of getting married."

"I am not," snapped John. "When I do go with a lassie 'twill be wi' a lady." Tom winced and John showed pleasure at the hit, though neither Jamie nor Margaret understood it.

Jamie took the matter in hand:—"But there's no reason," he said, "why you should work yet awhile. You should wait till Tom or I can help you."—"That's the reason," replied John, "that I want to, and if I can live without help I will, so help me God." He was not at all sure of his ground and, knowing his Jamie, trusted to bluster. Tom, he saw, had retired hurt from the fray. "I don't want to annoy Uncle Andrew," he said, "but he

doesn't like me."—"How can you say such a thing?" protested Margaret.—John was nettled and plunged: "If you want it straight out," he said, "there is not room for me and Tom in the same business. So it's Murdoch's or America. I told you in the beginning that I would not go to school, but I had not the courage then to look out for myself. Now I've done it and if you don't like it I can find somewhere else to live."—"But you don't know anything about Murdoch's, whether they are solvent, or whether they are on the up or the down," suggested Jamie.—"Murdoch's is all right," said Tom. "John's no fool."—"I should think not," cried Margaret, outraged at the mere suggestion of such a thing in her family.

So John had his way, and Jamie, at heart rather pleased with him, gave him a sovereign, and took him out to buy him a new suit of clothes.

These declarations of independence excited him, and made him envious that Tibby and John should both have so clear an idea of their positions. His own seemed muddled. When John said "I" he had a very definite notion of what he meant, with none of the aggressiveness that was often so distasteful in Tom. He was enraged at his young brother's coolness and his already extensive knowledge of Thrigsby and its ways.—"I'm glad we came here," said John. "There can't be another place in the world like it, for getting on, I mean. Look at the way it's growing."—"In a way," replied his brother, "that seems to me to make it more difficult if you haven't a solid position in the beginning. That is what makes me anxious about you."—"Oh! I'll be all right," said John. "Never fear. I wouldn't be stopped from getting on not by fifty uncles."—"Queer you should have that dislike of Uncle Andrew."—"Dod, I hated him at sight. He's so like mother."—That really shocked Jamie. "John!"

—"And Tom."—"Hush!"—"He's not a bit like you. Tom was always telling me what I should do and I won't take it from him. Thrigsby isn't all Keith Bros. & Stevenson and Thrigsby's a big place. I'll go my own way even if it's only to sell matches in the street."—"You won't need to do that while we've a roof over our heads." —"No, but I tell you what, as soon as I can I shall live in lodgings."—"Mother won't like that."—"Mother won't like what I'm doing now."—"Oh! she'll get over it."—"I'll be surprised if she does."—"What's come over you?"—"I dunno: a sort of fright I think."—"It seems unnatural in a lad like you."—"It's taken me weeks and weeks to get over it."—I'm glad to have had this talk with you, Johnny. I feel I know you better." John took his brother's arm and said: "You're a good old sort; and if it was going to the mill I think I wouldn't mind being in the business."—"Indeed? What is it you mind?" —"Well, it isn't Uncle Andrew and it isn't Tom. It's the two together. I'd hate it worse'n school. Ooh! I'm glad I haven't got a father or I'd never have dared to leave."—"I believe I'm *in loco parentis.*"—"You're not a bit like a father anyway."

Now Jamie began to feel uncomfortable, knowing that his affections were running away with him, making him take his colour from this young brother of his and see things very nearly from his point of view. That was pleasant but very much against his training which had instilled into him that if he was to allow any point of view but his own, it must be the Lord's and no other. This had frequently landed him in awkward places and aggravated in him that conflict between self-knowledge and self-conceit in which so many Scotsmen spend their miserable days. Feeling this conflict now strong in him, Jamie took it to be an essential part of his character and

not, as it was, a condition of the phase of development through which, without disturbance from outside, he was passing. Alarmed at himself, therefore, he fell back on the Lord's point of view. From that John was seen to be behaving abominably, flouting his duty and treating the respectable with disrespect. Though this aspect was distressing it was easy and made Jamie feel that if he chose to exert it, there was authority on his side. However, John, innocently chattering on, plunged his brother in even greater perturbation.—"You should," he said, "have a crack with Tibby. She's sized us all up. You're to be a great man, Tom's to be a rich man, and I'm to be a wanderer on the face of the earth."—"Tibby in the character of a wise woman is new to me," said Jamie.—John replied: "She is wise, at least, she is queer, and I wouldn't be in Murdoch's now but for her."—"Did you talk it over with her?"—"I did not, but it was what she said."

Jamie's thoughts swung back to Tibby in her kitchen insisting on the definition of her position by wages and he felt vaguely envious of her and yet angry to be envious. It was what he wanted himself, definition, and he had but the most confused notion of his position with regard to the persons immediately surrounding him, unless he fell back on the support of the Lord, when they became clear but also reduced and remote. His affections would not have that and yet, without renouncing the Lord, he could not have it otherwise.—O! this was too involved. He encouraged John in his chatter, and in the funny little swagger which he was every moment more patently assuming, and visited his resentment on Tibby.—If John came to grief through going into Murdoch's, it would be Tibby's fault. But of course John would not come to grief. That fate was not for any

Lawrie, or any Keith. They were out for the conquest of England, though England might not know it, even when conquered. That was the cleverness and the joke of it.—"I don't think you'll wander far, Johnny."—"Not if I can get my way, without."—"What is your way?"—"I don't know yet, but I can imagine just getting it and feeling fine."—Jamie laughed: "I'm thinking there'll be some shocks in store for us."—John gave a whoop: "Doesn't this great city make you feel strong and whirling?"—They were passing down a street in the centre of Thrigsby where there were still a few of the old black and white timbered houses, some with projecting upper stories, and an old inn that must once have stood in its own yard but now fronted a new wide street and was overshadowed with a huge warehouse.—"The world must have been very charming in the old days, but there were fewer people then," said Jamie.

Out of the inn came Mr. Wilcox who rushed up to Jamie crying: "Hoo, my lad! Good lad! I haven't seen you this many a long day. They could not grind down your genius in the office so they sent you to the mill, eh? The office is a sad place without you. I saw you from the window: back view.—I know that back, I said to myself. Such a back had John Kemble.—And how *are* you?"—"I'm very well," replied Jamie. "I have my brothers living with me now. This is my brother John."—Mr. Wilcox held out his hand:—"Welcome to Thrigsby," he said. "I'm not Mayor, but I don't mind speaking for the rest. Stick to your brother; he's a tower of strength. Fortune could never resist a face like that, not if she is the female of her usual portrait. —But I've news for you, James, my lad. Come and have a drink on it."—Jamie hesitated on account of John, who said: "Oh, I've been in public-houses before." So

they returned with Mr. Wilcox to the little low bar-parlour where they sat on old trestles with their feet fouling the sanded floors and Mr. Wilcox ordered ale for three from the stout lady behind the counter, whom he called Aunty.—"Well," said Jamie, "what's your news?"—Mr. Wilcox burst out in a torrent of words, speaking so fast that at first his hearers could make nothing of his story: They gathered however that he had left the firm.—"For ever!" he said. "Not one spot of dust from its unswept floors remains upon my boots. A mistake was made. Thousands lost! Thousands of golden sovereigns. It was traced, so they said, to our room. I asked for proof. None was forthcoming. 'Seek the responsibility elsewhere!' said I. But would they? Not a bit of it. When there's trouble in the office, you may have observed that it is always Peter Leslie who is made to pay. He's got a white face, and a white liver, and a pure white soul. He's a broken man. Child-bearing's the cause of it.—Now old Andrew knows what men in the office he can't break, and he lets them alone. He knows who's broken too, but he's getting old and is losing his nose for the breakable. So this time, to run no risks, it must be Peter. Poor old Peter! There he stood, stiff as a poker, with a choke in his throat staring hard at the wall in front of him. He would not, he could not break down. He was too hard hit. Well: he's a family man, and you know his wife, a high-stepper if ever there was one, and I say it is the duty of the bachelor to stand by the family man, who is always the one to be trodden on if there is any treading to be done, and, let me tell you, there is a damned sight too much of it in Thrigsby.—Well, that went on for a couple of days. Not a word did Peter say: not a word passed my lips, and you know what *I* am. We were in that office night

after night looking for that mistake—an old one, mark you, the effects of which had only just come home to the firm. The general feeling after a bit was that whether it was found out or not Peter was done for. I couldn't stand that. I've been in the same room with him for twelve years, and, damn it, the man's middle-aged and has no thought outside the firm."—"He's a very religious man," put in Jamie.—"Yes. And that makes it all the worse for him. He'd hardly dare put his nose inside his church if he lost his job. I could not stand it. If they want their mistake, I said, they shall have it. It took me two days and two nights to think out that mistake and there it was, very difficult to trace, in one of my ledgers. Then, I thought, if I find it myself they'll perhaps be suspicious, because they all know I'm a fool at the business. So I fetched in Nosey Tom and said I'd been over and over the books until I couldn't tell my nose from the figure nine and let him take them home with him. Back he came in the morning as pleased as Punch and walked straight into the old man's room. An hour later I am sent for, told I am next door to a thief and wholly an imbecile and unworthy of the trust which the firm had imposed on me from the moment of my entering their service as a lad. As a favour—as a favour! —I was given one month's salary. Thank you for nothing, I said, I have my savings and the mistake, if recorded in my books, did not have its origin there. Old Andrew roared like a consumptive cow; you know what a silly voice he has: and Nosey Tom muttered something about impudence. And then—then—I did *the* best piece of acting in my life. I crawled back like this——" In his fiery enthusiasm Mr. Wilcox rose, crept hang-dog to the door, went out, came in again pushing the door slowly open. He had contrived to expel all the blood

from his face and looked thin and shrunken. His hands trembled and the handle of the door rattled and in a dry whisper he croaked: "Peter! Peter!—Mr. Leslie. It is finished. My character is gone. I am a broken man. This room will know me no more. And I tell you it knocked Peter all of a heap. He could not get out a word. He was shaking and his hands were icy cold and he clutched mine.—'God bless you! God bless you!' he cried, and he could say nothing else but 'God bless you.'" —"God bless you, indeed," cried Jamie who had been carried away with the story and the power of Mr. Wilcox's acting.—"Oh! stow it!" replied Mr. Wilcox. "It's what I'd been wanting for the last five years."—"But who," asked John, "was Nosey Tom?" Mr. Wilcox dropped his jaw: "I'm blowed," he answered, "blowed if it isn't your brother." And John gave a dry little chuckle, but Jamie, still seeing the thing as a great and poignant drama, with Nosey Tom as the villain, almost groaned: "God forbid!"

Mr. Wilcox took a long drink at his ale and continued: "But that isn't my real news. I've joined the profession, and we must have another drink on that."—"Not for John," said Jamie.—"Havers!" cried John. "I'll drink you under the table."—"That's right," said Mr. Wilcox. "Don't you be put upon.—Three more, Aunty. There's a Mr. and Mrs. Beeton from the best London theatres coming down. She's a Terry on her father's side. They're to have a stock company at the Theatre Royal and I'm to be one of their comedians. Good health! We start in a fortnight's time, and I was wondering if you would like to write a prologue."—"Surely," said Jamie, "there are writers in Thrigsby better known than I. At least, I mean that I am not at all known, and besides,—the theatre!"—"If you have never been inside a

theatre," said Mr. Wilcox, with some heat, "you have no right to condemn it. That is what you pious folk are always doing."—"I wasn't condemning. I was only conscious of my own ignorance."—"About the only man in the world who is," said Mr. Wilcox. "However, think it over. I'm at the same old address. By the way, I'm Clarence now, Mr. Clarence Wilcox. I couldn't act under the name of Sam, could I? . . . I'm off to rehearsal now. *Richelieu*: not a laugh in it. Good-bye, sir. Good-bye, young sir; you stick to your brother and you won't go far wrong." He raised his hat very high above his head, set it on again at an angle, drew on a pair of light yellow gloves and strode out.

"Well," said Jamie, "what did you make of Mr. Wilcox?"—"I don't know," answered John after a pause. "There was a boy at school had a father like him and they're as poor as church mice." He made a face.—"He's a noble character," said Jamie.—"Aye, I daresay. But he'll die poor."—"What difference does it make how you die?"—"Eh! Jamie!" said John, "you wouldn't die poor and leave a widow as Mother was left."—But Jamie was already off on thoughts of his prologue, playing with the forbidden fruit. It would be a fine thing to have words of his spoken, as Mr. Wilcox could speak them, before an immense concourse of people. What a power words might exert! They would go echoing through the hearts of every man and woman there. They would be treasured, and bring up warm grateful thoughts of the man who had written them. And perhaps one day, after the prologue, he would write a play—a play by a Thrigsby author before a Thrigsby audience.—Wilcox would act in it. There should be a door in it: the door should slowly open, upon an empty room, and a man with a ghastly white face should open the door

and come in trembling, trembling, afraid of what he would see there, and his fear would grow into terror as he realised the emptiness, and the emptiness of his own soul. Jamie gripped his stick tight and he walked very fast so that John could hardly keep up with him. His thoughts raced. "Dod, Jamie," said John. "Think of them calling our Tom Nosey!"—"Didn't you think Mr. Wilcox a very fine actor, John?"—"Pooh! what's play-acting?"—And Jamie's thoughts collapsed:—"Indeed," he said to himself, "what is it?"—"I wonder," said John, "what they call Uncle Andrew."—"I can tell you that," replied Jamie savagely, flying back to the story of Peter Leslie. "They call him the Scotch turd, and you can thank your lucky stars you've thrown your bonnet over the windmills and gone into Murdoch's."

At home they found Margaret waiting for them: her old fighting self, roused from the lethargy and shyness which had settled on her since their coming to Thrigsby. She had on her bonnet and cloak all shining with jet beads which rattled as she spoke.—"John," she said, "you have defied my authority. I am going to take you to your Uncle Andrew to see what you have to say to him."—"I have nothing to say to him."—"We shall see that."—"And if I will not go."—"Then I and your brothers will make you go."—"Not I, Mother," said Jamie.—"Jamie!"—"My father, Dr. M'Phail used to say, was a gentle soul. He would not have forced any of us against our wills. I have been talking to John. He is set against the office."—"Why?"—"He has his reasons."—"What are they?"—"I imagine," said Jamie, "they are deep-rooted in his character."—"Character! A child like that."—"Indeed, mother, in many ways he is older than I am. He is certainly less easily deceived, and he has made up his mind."—Margaret made a show of surren-

der but her lips shut tighter than ever.—"At least," she said, "he owes it to your uncle to give him an explanation and to ask him for a recommendation."—"There's no harm in that," replied Jamie, jumping at the chance of relieving the strain and thanking Heaven that Tom was out.—"No," said John, "I see no harm in that."—So Margaret sent him up to don his new clothes and brush his hair and wash his neck. While he was gone she said to Jamie:—"It is natural that he should have an admiration for you as his eldest brother, but you ought not to take advantage of that to subvert my authority."—Jamie was so entirely unaware of having done any such thing that he could find nothing to say, nor indeed did Margaret seem to expect any rejoinder. She added: "It is the first grief my sons have caused me. Please God, it may be the last." And Jamie, prickly with distress, found uppermost in his mind the fantastic but somehow attractive idea that Tibby was responsible for it all. He was dimly aware of strange influences in the house driving them on to the ways they must go, and it was extremely pleasant to gather all these influences up into one thread and to accuse Tibby, mentally, of witchcraft. It gave her a characteristic personality and also prepared his mind and spirit for any astonishments that might come.

CHAPTER XIII

CLIBRAN HALL

IT was a long journey from Murray Street to Clibran Hall; a three-stage journey by omnibus with three horses. The day was cold with that damp irresistible chill of which Thrigsby possesses the peculiar secret. There was straw to warm the feet of the passengers and John, thrusting his feet in it, tucked his arms well up his sleeves and composed himself for warmth against a fat man who occupied the corner under the lamp. Margaret disdained the straw and sat stiff and upright under her beaded cape. The omnibus swung and creaked and the flickering light cast strange shadows on the faces of the travellers.—"Stiring times these," said the fat man to John.—"Are they?" replied the boy. "I've only just left school."—"Lucky to be you," said the fat man. "You'll reap the fruits of it all."—"Will I?" asked John politely, not knowing in the least what the man was talking about.—"Never heard John Bright speak? Ah! Better than a play, that is. Temperance, reform, but a sound Englishman."—Margaret nudged John, and whispered:—"You should not talk to strangers."—"It's he's doing the talking," whispered John, and the fat man pursued his argument:—"With men like that," he said, "we've no need of the violence and devastation they have in France. If what they tell me is true,

France must be a terrible country where no honest man is safe. Now John Bright he's a sensible man, and one sensible man is better than ten revolutions."—The word revolution frightened Margaret and she said: "Don't listen to him, John."—"How can I help it," muttered he, "with him talking so near my ear?"—"London," continued the fat man, "has got to heed what we say in the North. We're the backbone of the country and entitled to a voice. We're the brains of the country and London's the belly. Look at the map if it isn't so. England's narrow at the top and broad at the bottom, the bum I might say, to put it bluntly. Where are the brains? At the top. But you should hear John Bright. He's speaking to-morrow."—"Where?" asked John.—"At the Coal Exchange. I can give you a ticket." He unbuttoned his enormous overcoat and produced a bulging pocket-book from which he took a ticket. This he pressed into John's hand.—"Like a ticket, ma'am? Better than a play." But Margaret stared frigidly out of the window.—"He's a God-fearing man, and none of your atheists."—"Then," said Margaret, "if he fears God, why does he not put his trust in Him and not go disturbing the people?"—With considerable emotion the fat man replied: "To save them from the Godless, madam, and to save them from themselves." As he uttered this fervent sentiment the omnibus drew up. They had reached the first stage and were to change. In the second omnibus the fat man again took up the corner under the lamp, but Margaret kept John by the doorway though it was bitterly cold there. Two other men entered and were presently drawn into conversation by the fat man who recommended them to hear John Bright and gave them tickets. John listened intently to their conversation and was kindled to a glow to hear of riots and fighting on the Continent, and dis-

turbances in London.—"There'll be none of that," said the fat man, "when John Bright gets his way. Quaker stock, he is, the good English breed, that showed King George in America what they were made of. No German nonsense for them. Good, honest, North country manufacturing stock he is, and that's the stock the country's got to look to."—"Cobden's my man," said one of the others and they fell to a furious discussion of the merits of the two men.—"The way I look at it is this," said one of the controversialists. "We're making all this trade. Government won't help us, that's certain."—"We don't want Government help," said the fat man.—"No, all we want is not to be hampered by the Government. If these men won't see reason, we must have our own men in."—John began to think: "I'll be a Parliament man before I've done. I'll go to hear John Bright."

Margaret had ceased to pay any attention to these trivial political matters and was conning her address to Andrew, plotting how she could get him alone without her obstinate errant son. Meanwhile John pursued his ambitions: in ten years a partner in Murdoch's; in fifteen married to a wife, with money, perhaps Miss Murdoch: in twenty a Parliament man, and later Lord Carsphairn. —"Don't forget," said the fat man, "John Bright speaks in the Coal Exchange."—"I'll not forget," said John. "My name's John too."—"John what?" asked the fat man.—"John Lawrie."—"That's a good name. Make it Honest John."—"John Lawrie, M.P.," thought John, catching sight of his face in the window of the omnibus. As mirrored there it was rather interesting: a large white brow, great melancholy eyes and a little sensitive mouth and chin.—"Has John Bright got a beard?" thought John, and, unknown to himself, he thought aloud. —"Put those wicked thoughts from your head," said

Margaret. "John Bright is an agitator and a disturber of the Queen's peace."—"I don't suppose," said John with a thrilling flash of wit and insight, "I don't suppose the Queen has ever heard of him."—"The Queen," replied Margaret, "is the best of women and hears of everything."—"She eats chicken-bones with her fingers," said John, "and her real name is Mrs. Guelph."—Margaret would have protested against such light disloyalty but that they had come to the second stage and must descend. The fat man got out also, once more reminded John of his undertaking, touched the brim of his hat, and walked swiftly away with a lightness of foot astonishing in a man of his bulk.

No third omnibus appeared. They waited nearly half-an-hour for it but at last decided that they must walk.—"Perhaps," said Margaret, "your uncle will send us back in his carriage."—"Pigs might fly," thought John, but he said nothing and walked on just a little ahead of his mother. When they were near Clibran Hall but not yet within sight of it they began to hear a roar of voices, that might be shouting or singing, and growing louder and louder. Men, women and boys hurried past them and soon behind them they heard the clatter of horses' hoofs and a company of soldiers went swiftly by, turned down a side road and disappeared in the darkness.—"We must hurry," said Margaret, "and take refuge in your uncle's house or we'd best turn back."—"If there's anything in the wind," replied John, "I'll see what it is. I'll see you safe to Uncle Andrew's."—As they turned the corner they came in sight of an immense crowd of people gathered round an omnibus from which the horses were taken. On the top of this were three men who were haranguing the crowd, with much waving of arms and swaying of their bodies. A strange light was thrown on

the scene by torches and the crowd swelled and heaved as new members came to it. It was impossible to hear what was said. John and his mother were in the crowd before they realised that it was outside Clibran Hall and then it was impossible for them to turn back. They kept to the wall of the garden, Margaret gazing with disgust and scorn at the crowd, John tingling with excitement and straining to hear, but he could make nothing out. And suddenly the crowd broke as though it had burst and went surging up the garden to the door of Clibran Hall. John caught his mother in his arms and held her in front of him so that he carried her weight and protected her. They were borne along by the wall, through the awful press in the gateway and half-way up the drive when they managed to slip out into the garden. Stones began to fly and windows crashed. The noise of that seemed to satisfy the crowd more than their own for they were almost silent, except for the grunting and swearing of those still being thrust through the gate.—"Let us go by the back way," whispered Margaret, trembling in her son's arms. "In a while," answered John. "I want to see this out. I wonder will they fire the house."—"Oh! John! John!"—"Deed," said he, "it would be a grand sight."—The crowd began to cry: "Cat Lane! Cat Lane! Right of way! Right of way!" Another window went crash, but by the sound of it the shutters were closed. One of the leaders went up to the front door and banged upon it with the knocker.—"What do they want?" cried Margaret, the beads on her bonnet rattling.—"I can't tell," replied John, "but they're not doing all this for fun."—The hammering at the door went on, until at last it was opened. The crowd was hushed and John, caught up in the excitement, shivered and then gasped as Tom came out and stood very white and

determined-looking under the flickering light in the porch.—"Who's yon?" cried a voice. "Where's t'owd badger?"

One of the leaders ran up into the porch (for the crowd had fallen back as the door opened), and he and Tom talked together. Tom's remarks seemed to give satisfaction, for words were passed down into the crowd, which began at once to disperse. John heard a man say: "We've won. He'll build." And another asked: "Aye, but what'll he build?" There was some singing and cheering which became wild hooting as the clatter of hoofs was heard out in the road and the soldiers went by at a trot, exchanging chaff and banter with the rioters. Soon the garden was empty. John was disappointed. "I'd thought," he said, "it was going to be like the taking of the Bastille."—"Your uncle," observed Margaret, "would be just."—"I wonder why he sent Tom and what Tom was doing there and what it was all about. I'd have made a speech if I'd been he." For John's thoughts were still running on John Bright.

Margaret insisted that she would not go without seeing Andrew, though John tried to point out that he would not want to see them after such an evening's excitement.—"He'll be feeling a strong man," said she.—"Dod!" cried John, "he'll be shivering in his cellar."

They were ushered into the library where they found Andrew, in his dressing-gown, drinking a strong whisky toddy, and Tom, very excited, though subduing his feelings, still telling what had happened. Margaret commiserated her brother and abused the rabble.—"Obstinacy!" said Andrew, "stupid obstinacy! Where would they be without me, I should like to know? Who knows best what is good for them? All that fuss and my windows smashed because of a row of filthy cottages and

a dirty alley leading from an ash-pit to a slag-heap."—"Of course!" said Margaret, "you know best. You have the brains to see what they do not see."—"So I say," said her brother. "So I say again and again. Is the town to have a future or is it not? And if I and men like me do not look after its future, who will? The politicians I suppose and the Town Council who think of nothing but votes. They think because they've lived in a place for twenty years they must live there for ever, regardless of the expansion of the town's industries. What does it matter where they live, so long as they have factories to work in? Hum! Hum!"—Very savagely he bobbed his head down into his glass.—"Drunken, lecherous topers! Look at the birth-rate. There'll be no food for them to eat soon."—"We were caught in the crowd," said Margaret.—"Indeed," grunted Andrew, "and what brought you here at this time of night?"—"It is my boy John. He has insisted on leaving school and has, against my will, taken a post at Murdoch's."—Andrew swung round and fixed John with his eye: "Murdoch's? Why Murdoch's?"—"They—they wanted someone," stuttered John.—"Did you tell them you were my —er—connection?"—"I did not."—"Hum!"—"I want you to forbid it, Andrew," said Margaret.—Andrew drew himself up: "If a young man dares to think that he knows best what is good for him, let him. Let him find out his mistake." And that was all he would say in the matter. He ignored his sister's remarks and would not even look at John, who felt ashamed, miserable and contrite. It was his fault that his mother was so humiliated and he wanted to withdraw his resolution, but Andrew silenced him when he gasped and gurgled inarticulately, by tapping with his foot on the floor. Tom meanwhile stood by the fireplace staring over their heads at the

print of *The Industrious Apprentice* which hung on the wall opposite to him. John hated him. Margaret was silenced at last. Not a word was spoken for twenty-three minutes by the clock. John glared at Tom and said under his breath:—"The fish! The clammy glue-blooded fish!"—Ostentatiously every five minutes Tom drew from his waistcoat pocket a new gold watch, which when he left Murray Street that morning he had not possessed. —"I'll have a gold watch by I'm twenty-one," said John to himself. "I am tired, Margaret," said Andrew at last. "May I keep Tom here to-night?"—"Yes, Andrew," replied she sadly and with all the spirit let out of her. "Yes, Andrew, you may. He was brave with the crowd, wasn't he?"—Tom smiled. "They've spoiled my evening for me," growled Andrew and still not a word did he speak to John. Tom nodded good-night to him. Oh! he was pleased with himself, was Tom!

As she rose to go Margaret murmured that perhaps the omnibus would not be running. Andrew growled out that she could hire a fly at his expense—as far as the Town Hall, and he asked Tom to tell John to go and fetch one.—"I'll bring it to the gate, mother, if you'll walk down there," said John, for he was resolved never to enter his uncle's house again.

The omnibus was standing derelict in the road as he ran out. Every pane of glass in it was shattered and the shafts were broken.—John said to himself: "They should have brought down the house about his ears. I would: indeed I would." His mortification got the better of him and his eyes filled with tears, and later on he was clattering back in the fly over the cobbles and his mother said to him: "See! what trouble you have caused and how good your uncle is to Tom. He has given him a gold watch." He could not keep back his tears and

his mother consoling him stroked his hands and told him that all would come right in the end when he was a man and understood the world better. She said: "Tom will put things right with your uncle and explain to him that you did not mean to hurt his feelings, but were only anxious to do your share in advancing the family."—The last half of her observation touched John to the quick, explained to him what he had not properly understood himself, but his gratitude for such sympathy was at once wiped out by her insistence on Andrew's feelings and ignorance of his own. He gulped down his tears and his little chin stiffened and he stoked up his personal ambition so that it burned away his desire to serve the family.

At the Town Hall they discharged the fly and drove home in silence to Murray Street. Neither said a word to Jamie of what had happened. Jamie looked in as John was getting into bed. "Is it Murdoch's?" he asked. "Murdoch's it is," replied John.

CHAPTER XIV

GREIG AND ALLISON-GREIG

MAGGIE was a marvel with her needle. At the age of twelve she had astonished Kirkcudbright with her sampler done in single stitch on silk canvas, birds, dogs, flowers, lettering all done amazingly: a work of art. She could darn linen so that it almost needed a magnifying-glass to detect the repair: she could embroider: she could make lace: she would work shawls for her mother which it was hard to tell from the best Indian work: she would knit socks and singlets for her brothers. She could draw too and earned thirty shillings by doing fifteen pictures of Jerusalem from different aspects to illustrate a lecture given by a missionary home for his holidays from Madras. She could also carve in wood, and she was continually adding to her accomplishments: illuminated lettering: painting on china: crystoleum painting: and, although she could hardly tell one note from another, she taught herself to play hymn tunes on the harmonium. Her misfortune had left her so shy that she was almost inarticulate and only Tom was able to get more than four consecutive words out of her. For all that she had many friends, possessing, like her mother, the Scots talent for making the English take her at her own valuation.

The Greigs were Scotch but they had been so easily

successful and had married so well that they had never needed to employ this talent. From being left in abeyance it had withered away and they had become English. One Angus Greig had invented a standard pattern for printed calico and also a kind of thin cotton stuff of which India demanded millions of bales yearly. So successful was this family that they did not live in Thrigsby but far north among the fells and lakes of Westmoreland. However, they were Scotch enough to be aware of all their relations and curious about them. They admitted Andrew's authority as head of the English branch of the Clan Keith, though they were not altogether in favour with him because they continued to know the Allison-Greigs after Hubert of that family had run away with his (Andrew's) wife.

When in town Mrs. Donald Greig called on Mrs. Nicol Lawrie and subsequently Maggie was invited to stay at Lowrigg. The invitation was accepted. Maggie went and never returned except for an occasional visit. The change was never officially acknowledged. Murray Street was home to Maggie, though she was not there above six weeks in the year. She had seen her chance and taken it, and was governess, housekeeper, confidante, religious adviser, moral sweetener, and buffer against her husband to Mrs. Donald.

In Murray Street her absence was hardly noticed. She was always referred to in the family as though she were on the point of returning or indeed in the house. Only Margaret fidgeted if a week passed without a letter from her, as she never did if Mary omitted to write. And Maggie served the family by opening up the Greig mansions as a holiday ground for her brothers, who were glad enough to escape from their offices to the company of these people who were rich enough to bear their

wealth easily and cultured enough to have charming people and even, occasionally, distinguished people staying in their houses. A week among them would help Jamie to hold his head up. He could forget his mill and sit drinking in the talk to which he dared never contribute, so busy was he turning over in his mind the ideas thrown out. He was so happy in it that his happiness seemed to him contribution enough. The women were so sweet, so elegant, so graceful that he felt unworthy to speak to them and when they spoke to him, as they must, because he was so handsome, he would blush and stammer. In vain did Maggie convey to him the complimentary remarks they made about him. These did but increase his ecstasy and his bashfulness. A cluster of beauties were these ladies, married and maiden, to him. They did not exist for him but rather hovered in the enchanted world which was his holiday. And slowly one of them became, for him, disengaged from the group, Agnes Allison-Greig, though he was hardly sensible of her name. She took shape for him and he had for her an adoration so tyrannical over his emotions that had she ever become aware of it he must have died. He did not even want her to know of it; it was his ecstasy, a swooning bliss of which he dared hardly become aware himself. Had he become aware of it, had he admitted it, the idea must have been ridiculous for him, for this was the quality of his mind that an idea in becoming clear had but its moment of beauty and then faded into absurdity. Therefore Miss Agnes remained shadowy to him and excepted from the thoughts and emotions of his everyday life. She was a part of the scene, as essential to it as the light of the sun. When she was away the lake, the beck, the fall, the green and grey fells lost half their beauty, though not their enchant-

ment. He would spend hours sitting at the window and resented the activities of the rest of the company who were always forcing him to go riding or walking or sailing on the lake or to take part in a game of croquet or Badminton. He could enjoy those too, but not with the sweet torment of his contemplation.

After a week of such happiness he could return to Thrigsby and the mill without resentment. The squalor, the blind fury of work, even the human misery that hemmed him in there seemed to be almost a necessary complement of the severe dignity of the fells. His humour which in the northern beauty vanished, came rushing back upon him as soon as he set foot in the streets of the dirty town. He was never at the Greigs' with his brothers. The place where they lived became his sanctuary, the image of his most secret activity, which, faintly though he was aware of it, he regarded as peculiar to himself. He wrote many verses, some of which were published in *The Thrigsby Post* over the signature, Quintus Flumen.

He began to discover beauty in Thrigsby, more especially on windy wet days when clouds were blown through the rising smoke and the pale sunlight would gleam down upon the tall chimneys, and the men and women in the streets would look pinched and shrunken and the sprawling mass of the town had only an obscure and menacing significance. Thrigsby only hurt and offended him when the light was clear and it stood out harsh, confident and blatant. This did not often happen, and it was for the most part covered in the obscurity of its own creation, an obscurity which, it seemed to Jamie, crept into and darkened the minds of all who lived in it. He had gusts of an aimless passion which set him aching and throbbing and left him with a fine

poetic melancholy, which would so disturb his mother that she would secretly give him Epsom salts in the morning and she would talk him over with Tibby who would say: "He's no ordinary man." Margaret's chief concern was that, whereas Tom and John were always talking of their success in business and bringing home tales of commendation passed by their superiors, Jamie never breathed a word of what passed at the mill. She was horrified and scared when she heard from Mrs. Leslie, her most devoted admirer, that Jamie was often to be seen in the company of the "wicked" Hubert Allison-Greig, who had had the effrontery several years before, after the death of Andrew Keith's wife, to return to Thrigsby and start a weekly paper in which he criticised the city fathers, the church, the political parties, the architecture, the local school of painters, everything in the town from its music to its scavenging. —"He! He! Mrs. Lawrie," said Mrs. Leslie. "You can't always tell a man by the company he keeps, can you? Birds that flock together aren't always of the same feather, are they? Yet I couldn't be fonder of James, not if he were my own son."—"My sons," said Margaret, "would never do anything of which they were ashamed to tell me."—"And yet he *was* seen with that Allison-Greig."—"I don't believe it," said Margaret. Yet she did believe it, and locked it up in her breast, and used it to account for Jamie's reticence. She said nothing to him but told herself that the scoundrel Hubert was preying on her son's innocence in a base attempt to worm his way back into the family. In time Jamie would see through this transparent villainy and would discard the schemer. Her dread, however, was lest Andrew should hear of it.

Jamie had no such thought. He liked Hubert be-

cause he was a nice man and amusing and Jamie was as incapable of suspecting others of intrigue as of dealing in it himself. Mrs. Andrew was dead, her story was, for him, dead with her. Hubert had a portrait of her in his rooms. Very beautiful she was, but he never spoke of her, though in speaking of women generally he was chivalrous and tender, caustic and vitriolic in his references to the virtuous and oppressive husbands of Thrigsby. Besides, he knew amusing men, good talkers and good livers, who liked their Thrigsby for the entertainment it provided and the strange characters it harboured, and never took it seriously. They had admired the verses of Quintus Flumen and accepted Jamie on the strength of them though they could never get a word out of him. He was much too frightened of them.

Hubert's view was that a man must oblige the world to get his living, but that, having got it, it was his own affair. This suited Jamie's feelings until he found that Hubert was an atheist. Then he was alarmed. God had made Scotland, the lakes and fells of Westmoreland, and Agnes. To doubt or to deny God was offensively ungrateful. Everything that was not Scotland, Westmoreland or Agnes was to be endured. Hubert, however, said it was to be enjoyed and would not hear of any cleavages between the human and the divine. He made his young cousin read a book called *The Vestiges of Creation.* It merely had the effect of freezing his idealism and made him so uncomfortable that to save himself he denied science altogether, and, to his mother's delight, had a violent religious phase, in which she imagined him to be praying for strength to resist temptation. The result of this was that Jamie, in his agony, begot a clear idea of the God of the Anglican

Church, which met the usual fate of his ideas, when clarified. He was not and could not be an atheist, that is, a sceptic, but he was now able to appreciate Hubert's criticisms of things Thrigsbeian, and to understand that things as they appear are not always things as they are, which again are not necessarily what they should be. He took this revelation much to heart, was very uncomfortable about it and puzzled to find Hubert taking it so good-humouredly. How could a man believe *The Vestiges of Creation* and live?—Hubert squeezed him into an utterance of this sentiment and countered with: "How can a man believe in the Bible and live? No, my dear James, what people believe is what they do. Which comes first? Believing or doing? Ah! There you have me. And why, if people must do what they believe, should I waste energy in criticising them? Because I can tolerate everything except hypocrisy. And why not hypocrisy? People believe in that too."—Jamie was aware of the circuitous ways of other people's minds, but had not connected them with hypocrisy. He was generally benevolent in his use of words, and *hypocrite* meant to him something so detestable that he could never apply it to anyone he knew. On the other hand, he knew very little of those with whom he associated. Those he loved he never dreamed of criticising or analysing—and he loved anyone who was amiable to him. Those whom he did not love were only the furniture of his world, necessary but uninteresting. No one had ever occupied his thoughts so much as Hubert did now and from Hubert, with his lively wit, his deep experience, his genial mockery, there came a current of feeling, pure and cold, which braced Jamie's emotions and made him begin to realise that life was not going to be the simple affair he had imagined. And why not? It was

simple enough for Tom and John: or it seemed so: they got what they wanted or they wanted what they got. Both were doing well in their respective firms. Tom was already a buyer; John was travelling for Murdoch's; while he remained at the mill. To be sure he was making as much money as either, but why did he stay while they moved on, and went from one kind of work to another?—He propounded the problem to Hubert who said: "Either you are later in maturing than they are, or you are fundamentally not interested."—"But I *am*," cried Jamie, "I *am* interested. I came here to make a career for myself and I mean to succeed. It would break my mother's heart if any of us were to fail. I've done well at the mill. I found the manager who was there when I went out in a fraud. There was a foreman and a buyer in it too. I expected to be promoted for it, but I was not. Another manager was appointed and I stayed on."—"Did you ask to be promoted?" said Hubert.—"I did not. I expected it."—"Then you don't know either your Thrigsby or your Andrew. You can't expect the world to see your extraordinary merit without its being pointed out and Andrew certainly won't perceive your virtues unless you make it plain to him that you are fully aware of his."—"But I don't lick his or any other man's boots."—"That," said Hubert, "is not what your Andrew requires. What he wants is an admission that he is in the strong position, a position to have his boots licked by anyone who is mean enough to do it. Acknowledge his position, my dear James, make it clear to him that you have too much respect for yourself to lick his boots and he will regard you as worthy of consideration."—"I never thought for a moment of his position. He is my mother's brother."—"He is a rich Englishman," said Hubert, "at a time when

it is generally believed that a rich Englishman is the noblest work of God."—"That," replied Jamie, "is not my belief. My belief is that the noblest work of God is a good woman."—"God save us!" cried Hubert. "You're a pilgrim, a-looking for the phœnix. And if you act on your belief you will be left in the wilderness. It is a faith entirely unsuited to these islands, where the pirates of all nations come to settle. You'll walk the plank, my James."—Jamie felt extremely miserable, as though he were damned from the beginning.—"God help me," he thought, "perhaps I'm only a fool."—He looked so woebegone that Hubert took pity on him and comforted him, saying: "No, no, you know better than the rest, that is all, even if you don't do better or as well, and you are worth fifty Andrews, for you have something of the artist in you and good can come of your harm, whereas from Andrew's good only harm can come. He is a trader, a skilful trader, but because he claims authority for his trade all his works are mischievous."—Jamie's emotions got the better of him and he said: "You must have hated him."—"Once upon a time," said Hubert. "Yes, But that's all done. I found the marks he had left on a good woman: the mark of the beast." He laughed.—"By their women ye may know them. It all comes down to flesh and blood at last, though they have their Gods, and their money, and their ideas."—"Ideas!" says Jamie. "Do you scoff at ideas?"—He had imagined Hubert to be a philosopher. —"I'll scoff at anything that feeds the conceit of a man," said Hubert. "Aye, even at youth and chivalry if they be so debased."—Jamie winced. Hubert was not being encouraging. If a man was to have no God, no ideas, no money to speak of, how was he to communicate with his fellow-men who believed in all these

things? And yet Hubert was amazingly nice, so human, so quick to respond, quicker than anyone else. And surely if that were so, it did not matter much if his words were bewildering. Jamie tried to say so. He was deeply moved. Hubert said: "Have you no nice vulgar friends you can go with? Religion is really very bad for a young man. God is for people who are fit for Him, like Spinoza."—"Who?" asked Jamie.—"An old Dutch Jew who polished lenses and really did understand the God of his tribe. But then he took some trouble about it. I should try human beings if I were you, even if you are Scotch. That is not always incurable. The Greigs were cured by marrying decent Englishwomen, and learning how to be lovers and husbands. To be sure they had a genius in the family which the Keiths never had, though they all think a successful man must be a genius. That's young of course. A young man mistakes the conceit with which he is bursting, for genius, or, at any rate, overpowering talent. It takes an honest man to acknowledge the mistake."—Jamie felt his bowels turn to water. He had been touched on the raw. Suppose he had made that mistake, and suppose he should not be honest enough to admit it! To make sure he admitted it then and there and mentally recorded the fact that he was not a genius. Of course he made a reservation in favour of overpowering talent, which might or might not show itself in the future, if—but he was modest about this—it had not already done so. He was not at all sure that he liked Hubert setting the Greigs above the Keiths. After all, the Keiths had come first. It was they who had opened up the way for the Greigs: and genius was an accident for which no family was entitled to take credit to itself as it surely might for adherence to virtue, in-

dustry and right-living. No: there was stuff in the Keiths, and then, Hubert knew nothing at all about the Lawries, who had yet to prove themselves,—and would! It was to this loyalty that Jamie always returned from his perplexities and with the hope it gave him he went on at his mill confident that he would one day emerge to astonish both the Keiths and the Greigs. By force of habit he became rather attached to the mill; "Cat Oil," as the hands called it because it had a hole in the door by which the night watchman's cat went in and out. He was quite fond of the hands too, perpetually astonished at their good humour, their easy ways with each other, their stubborn assertive independence. There were rich men at Hyde Bridge who had been mill hands in their youth. Their brothers, their nephews were still mill hands, but they all met at chapel on Sundays and that equality was not forgotten during the week. As he penetrated more deeply into their lives Jamie sometimes felt obscurely ashamed of the feeling of superiority which he could not bring himself to relinquish. And he could not help contrasting some of the mill-owners with his uncle. They took their profits even as he did, but they did not do it with the air of being divinely inspired so to do. They thanked God for it on Sundays even as Andrew did, but they were humble about it, and not so sure of being heard. When he thought so Jamie found the figure of Hubert looming large in his mind, and thinking it over, he would come to envy of his young brother John who had defied Andrew and made the first assertion of the Lawriean principle of the universe, denying both the egoism of the Keiths and the luck of the Greigs. Attempting to define the Lawriean principle he fumbled about with the words—good sense—intelligence—honesty—human for-

bearance; but none of them satisfied his desire.—He sat at his desk in the mill looking down into the dirty yard where the lorries were loaded and unloaded. The light he loved was over the rectangular buildings and the tall chimneys, the pale light coming and going through the heavy torn clouds and the pall of smoke. These words might do very well in business but beyond that lay so much—life—love—warmth—order. That last was the word. It implied something created and to his imagination there appeared two shadowy women: Agnes of the lake, and Elizabeth who had married Andrew Keith and loved Hubert Allison-Greig. Through women, he thought, or rather dreamed, for he was beyond thought, would the Lawriean principle be asserted.—When he returned to his sober senses he felt that he had got the better of Tom and John, of Hubert and Andrew and was his own man again. As for the mill—the mill could go to the devil for all he cared, if it should prove to be not the way to his desire. He worked no more that day but wrote a letter of eight pages to his sister Mary, telling her of the revelation that had come upon him. When he had written it he tore it up, thinking that Mary was living among clever men and would despise his thoughts. Before he went home he had written a poem to Agnes, but it was rather fleshly, so he altered it and addressed it to Elizabeth.

CHAPTER XV

MARGARET DISSATISFIED

AFTER her defeat at the hands of her youngest son and her humiliation by her brother Margaret began to have a contempt for Thrigsby and showed it by taking a keener interest in Mary than in any other member of her family. She began to talk of "My daughter in Edinburgh—Christopher North—she lodges in the same house as that occupied by De Quincey, and all her friends are literary men and so intellectual, though not above having their joke, if my daughter writes truly." She was disappointed and keenly anxious about Jamie. Tom she knew was saving money and John still gave her every week a fourth of his earnings, a few shillings of which were regularly put by towards that fund which should enable her one day to do without her pension and pay back every penny she had ever had. Jamie paid the bills but kept secret as to what he did with the rest. —It was very little, but Margaret could not know that. —So she was unhappy, poor woman, though not so very poor either, because she liked it. She wanted not only the assertion but also the immediate admission by Thrigsby at large of the Lawriean principle, but, unlike her son, she had never defined it.—Definition is the first stage in thought and like most of the human race she never reached it.—She had homage in plenty.

Mrs. Leslie called twice a week to assure her that she was the most wonderful of women. And on all the other days of the week there were other women to do the same. There were also male admirers who might or might not have designs upon her widowhood. She never encouraged them to declare themselves. They were of Brighton Brightonians and she regarded herself as a temporary sojourner in that district until the fine house was made for her by her sons, for she made no allowance in their lives for marriage, not for many a long year. They must have their positions and then look round for wives worthy to stand by their side. A wit called her the Roman Matron of Murray Street, and though the neighbours looked most carefully for weaknesses in her they could find none. She was extremely able and organised the only thing which she could lay her hands on outside her household, namely the parish in which she lived, to the astounded admiration of the rector and the annoyance of his wife. She suffered because she could not organise the careers of her sons, whom she used frequently to visit at their work, even making the train journey out to Hyde Bridge once a month to see how Jamie and the mill were getting on.—One day she said: "To think that one day, perhaps, you will control all this." Jamie was in a despondent mood and replied: "Not while Uncle Andrew is alive. He doesn't like me."—"But you must *make* him like you."—"It is a little late for that."—"He never sees you, what a fine man you have grown into. He has no opportunity of knowing what your work is like."—"He'd misjudge it if he had."—"I think you should ask to be moved to the offices. Tom has done so well there and made such useful friends. You have no chance of making friends here."—"That's

true," sighed Jamie regretfully. He had just come to the conclusion that the mill hands were far too good for him. Margaret pounced on her chance. "Do you think it wise to see so much of Hubert Greig?"—"He is the best friend I have."—"But you cannot be a friend to him, considering the injury and disgrace he has brought on your family."—"Good men know him."—"They would not but for the fact that he is a rich man."—That was tactless of Margaret; the cynicism roused Jamie's obstinacy.—"He's the kindest man," he said, and she replied tartly: "A man who has lost his reputation would need to be."—"Is kindness nothing?" cried he.—"Oh! Jamie! Is honour nothing?"—"And which," cried Jamie, "is the honest man? He who made the woman suffer or he who suffered for the woman?"—"As to that," replied his mother, "there are no two opinions and it is not a fit subject for discussion."—"I'll stay here," said Jamie, "and keep my friend. Out of sight is out of mind, and my uncle will give as little thought to me in the future as he has done in the past."—"That is not the way to get on."—"Then I'll not get on."—"Jamie!"

A day or two later Margaret took matters in hand and went herself to beard Andrew in his lair at the office. He kept her waiting for three-quarters of an hour after her name had been brought to him; not from any desire to incommode her but because that was his habit with visitors, partly from a wish to make them feel his importance, partly to support his belief that from nine o'clock to half-past six every day neither he nor his managers nor his clerks nor his warehousemen nor any one within his doors ceased for a moment from their labours. So while Margaret sat in the waiting-room below he sat by his writing-table and twiddled a white

paper-knife. At last he rose and touched the bell-pull and she was shown up. He was not pleased to see her and made no attempt to pretend that he was. He had heard that she came to the office to see Tom and had been to the mill and he felt very strongly that a woman's place is her home, and that, as a man makes no attempt to understand her work there, so she should not spy upon him in his sphere. Andrew's mind was as full of pigeon-holes as his desk, and once filed he never doubted that he had its contents rightly placed.—He waved his hand to a chair which Margaret took. Then he waited for her to speak. She was rather breathless and for the moment possessed by an indignation which she thought she had, like a good Christian, subdued, at the humiliation he had put upon her at Clibran Hall. At last she managed to gasp out:—"My son——" He thought she was referring to John, and answered: "He had his choice. Let him abide by it."—"John," said she, "is doing very well, very well indeed."—"I would like to know," observed Andrew, "where the building trade would be without us to give employment."—But Margaret was not to be put off by generalisation.—"It is Jamie," she said. "I am anxious about him."—"Ah!" observed Andrew, "I thought that would come. He's a Lawrie, and soft."—"My husband," replied Margaret, "had something like genius."—"That," rejoined Andrew, "is an affliction which we could well be spared. There is genius, which is to say madness, in the Greigs."—"I want to talk to you about Jamie."—"What has he been doing?"—"It is what he is not doing. I hope you are satisfied with his work at the mill."—"The mill is working quite satisfactorily. He is doing no harm."—"But he is not making any friends or establishing any connections."—"That is his own affair. You cannot blame me

if he will not use his advantages. He is making, for his age, a handsome income."—"Oh, yes."—"Then what is your complaint?"—"He has not the opportunities he ought to have."—"He will have the opportunities he makes. Really, Margaret, I expected more reason from you. I cannot alter the organisation of my business even to accommodate my nephews. Tom is useful here, Jamie is useful there."—"It is a question of experience."—"Pooh! he is out of harm's way."—I wish you would think it over."—"I have thought it over."

That was final. And once again Margaret had to accept defeat. She took it rather well on the whole, expressed a wish that Andrew should come and see her more often.—"My life is a busy one," he said. "You have every reason to be satisfied. Tom at any rate will make a position for himself. He is the one I know best. He is, I assure you, a credit to the family."—"But I want you to be fair to the others too."—"I am, I hope," said Andrew, throwing up his head and blowing out his chest, "a just man. Jamie wanted steadying. A woman, a mother can understand very little of a young man's needs. You can take my word for it, he wanted steadying. When he is steadied I will do what I can for him; indeed I will do all in my power, and I hope he will be grateful."—"Oh! I am grateful, Andrew," said Margaret. "You must not think me ungrateful, but I am naturally anxious."—"Of course, of course," said Andrew and he fell back on generalisations and talked her out of the room, down the passage and into the hands of Mr. Clulow who showed her to the door.

Margaret was surprised at her own feelings. They were as near disloyalty to the Keiths as she could get. She was extremely uncomfortable and to relieve herself visited her exasperation upon Hubert Allison-Greig.

She told herself that Andrew was aware of Jamie's acquaintance with that scoundrel and was therefore quite properly antagonistic. For some days she brooded over this idea until she had persuaded herself that Hubert was deliberately and satanically plotting to ruin her son in order yet further to injure and despoil Andrew. All she knew of the story was that Andrew had refused to divorce his wife and had made Hubert's existence in commercial circles in Thrigsby impossible. Hubert had then gone with "that woman" to London where she had been punished for her sin by death in the birth of the child which she in her wickedness had not borne for Andrew. Every one of the prejudices of Margaret's religion and morality stood on end and roused her almost to terror of Hubert. He had come back to Thrigsby on purpose to contaminate the younger generation. Hearing that Andrew had three nephews come to make their start in life he had descended like a wolf upon the fold. Andrew's wife was not enough for him; Andrew had a sister, a God-fearing, upright, steadfast woman; she too must be injured. So, having directed Hubert's advances upon herself as standing for all that in his alliance with the devil he must adhere to, she scented battle. At last she had something to fight. Poverty had been subdued by her own unaided effort. Here was lewdness come to the assault of the citadel: and of her sons, who should defend her to the last gasp, Jamie was all but conquered.—Margaret was almost her old self again. She was never subtle in her campaigns, but believed in a direct assault upon the enemy. She got Tibby to turn out Jamie's pockets—for she scorned to do such a thing herself—and in turning over the papers that were produced saw verses, a letter or two and could not help in this way becoming possessed of Hu-

bert's address. She had not read Jamie's letters. No: her eye had fallen on one of them, and that one happened to provide her with the information she required.

Hubert lived in St. Peter's Fields; an open space which had been fields in the time of his grandfather, but was now bare of all vegetation. One side of it was occupied with offices in a terrace which had once been houses, built in an attempt to make a square in the days when Thrigsby's rich men still lived near their work and sometimes over their warehouses. Hubert was a child-like being and regarded his tastes as existing to be gratified, and when he had not a fully developed taste to deal with he was quite content to do his best with a whim as substitute. He was mischievous but bore no ill will, and he loved contrasts. That was why he lived in Thrigsby which took itself so seriously, while his own dearest employment was blowing bubbles with his thoughts. That, in his view, was what thoughts were for; they had nothing to do with the serious business of life which was tragic and only to be dealt with by drawing on a man's last emotional reserves. If he had been loose and spendthrift and therefore bankrupt, when it came to that serious business—ah, well, so much the worse for him. He would never know the tragedy of his own life. As for taking the obvious and superficial appearances of life seriously, that was a mere waste of energy and under no circumstances to be approved. Rather it was to be actively discouraged, and he did all he could to discourage it. He found journalism a good and amusing means of furthering his aims and of meeting young men. A definite theory of life he had not: that seemed to him to be taking things altogether too seriously, to expect them to fit in with any idea he might have; but he was firmly on the side of the young against

the old. He was a dandy, very proud of his whiskers and careful of his dress, but, for contrast, he had a farm twenty miles out of Thrigsby and plumed himself on his knowledge of Berkshire pigs and his skill and cunning in the buying or selling of a horse. On this evening he had arranged a dinner for the bailiff of his farm, Mr. Horne, and the editor of his paper, Currie Bigge, a clever young man from Glasgow who had come to him from the staff of a local Wesleyan journal. They had dined and wined well. "Ech!" said Mr. Horne, "I mun let out me belt!"—and Hubert was brewing a milk punch, when his man brought in word that a lady was downstairs and wished to speak to him. Bigge and Horne had only this in common that women meant the same to them. Mr. Horne winked at Bigge, and Bigge tapped his large nose, and wagged his head towards the inner door. Together they rose and tiptoed out of the room.—"A lady?" asked Hubert.—"Not a young lady," replied the man.—"I should hope not," said Hubert, "at this time of night. A lady in distress perhaps?"—"She is heavily veiled, sir, and she said her business was most urgent."—"Take away the glasses for the punch in to the gentlemen in the inner room and I will see the lady."—Margaret was introduced. She smelled the liquor and tobacco at once. She saw the charming pictures on the wall, the elegance of the furniture; she saw the grace and ease of Hubert's carriage and it seemed to her insolent: and she was afraid. She raised her veil.—"We have not met before," she said; "I hope we shall not meet again." She trembled and whipped up her indignation.—"I am Margaret Keith."—"Cousin Margaret," said Hubert. "I *am* glad to see you. I ought to have called ages ago, only——"—"I should not have received you," she said.—"The Keiths have that

feeling," rejoined Hubert, "and I can understand it. But please sit down. You are not interrupting me and I can give you the whole evening if necessary."—He seemed to her more than even insolent.—"I am a widow," she said.—"If you are in any difficulty," he observed, thinking to help her out and put her at her ease, "I shall be only too glad to assist you in any way I can."—"I would not come to you for help, Mr. Greig."—He remembered then that she was Andrew's sister; very like Andrew too in face: Andrew liked being uncomfortable: perhaps she did too.—She plunged: "James Lawrie is my son."—"You should be proud of him. He has the true grace in him."—"My whole desire is to be proud of him, and therefore I have come to ask you not to see him."—"I like him."—"I do not judge you, Mr. Greig. I am the judge of no man. But he has received favours at his uncle's hands."—Hubert turned on her almost in anger: "That story is dead," he said. "It should not carry its bitterness over the generations."—"We have our pride," snapped Margaret.—"Aye, you have that," cried Hubert, almost forgetting himself, for she looked so like Andrew as she said those words. "Come, come. We know what feelings there are. What is it you want?"—"I want you to refuse to see my son."—"And if he will not be refused? He is not a child."—"He is a child to me and always will be."—"Ah! I like you for that. But he is not a child to himself. You must remember that. . . . Have I injured him in any way? He has talked to me freely and frankly."—"Has he? Has he?"—Margaret could not place herself under any obligation to the wicked Hubert, even for light upon her son's thoughts and character. She checked herself and went on to point out that though her two younger sons were rapidly making positions for

themselves, Jamie was confined to his mill, where he saw no one but his inferiors and had no one to perceive how he must shine amongst them. She did not even hint at grudge on Andrew's part but Hubert tumbled to her meaning.—"I am grateful to you for coming," he said. "But be sure I have no influence good or bad over Jamie. If anything it is he who has influenced me for good. What would you say if he were to leave his uncle's firm?"—"I should forbid it."—"And condemn him to the mill!"—"He would not be if he gave up——" —"Me? I don't think so. He has known me only since last summer when I found him in Westmoreland dreaming of a world in which there were no factories, no trains, no commerce, no uncles, no England—Andrew must have formed his opinion of him before that."— "He would change."—"Not Andrew. Not for you, nor for anyone in the world."—Margaret remembered her recent unhappy experience and was silent, and having come to silence, her native habit, she could not break it. Hubert took it to be the end of the interview. He rose and walked uneasily about the room. He had begun to feel sorry for her: so grim and stiff she was, so unyielding. Only his chivalry could make him serious for any length of time.—"I will promise you," he said, "that the boy shall come to no harm through me, I will promise you that. In all my life I have harmed no man but one and that was not altogether harm, nor altogether of my doing. Indeed, I think it true that a man can harm none but himself——" He could not keep it up and flashed: "Short of murder, that is, and then I am not so sure but the victim is a partner in the crime." —"Shame on you," cried Margaret, "to speak so lightly." It was too much for her and she stalked out of the room.—"Lord!" thought Hubert, "what a fellow I

am to be my age"—he was forty-six—"and to be the victim of my feelings."

He called to Horne and Bigge who returned with the punch-bowl nearly empty.—"Ever hear," asked Hubert of Bigge, "ever hear of or see the work of Quintus Flumen?"—"Aye."—"Is he a poet?"—"As near as Thrigsby is ever likely to get. The lace does not stand for poetry."—"Shall we have him for *The Critic?*"—"If he could do light verse."—Hubert nodded. He was more interested in Jamie than ever and had already forgotten his promise to Margaret. In any case he would not leave it to her to define what was and was not "harm."

He made a note in his diary to see his brother Donald. Already he was beginning to think of ways of rescuing the unhappy James from Andrew's clutches.—"What a shame!" he said to himself. "What a shame!" And as he thought of Jamie's fate, as he thought of him struggling to become a successful Thrigsbeian, so terrible a gloom came over him that to throw it off he began to talk to Mr. Horne of his pigs and poultry and the price of wheat, reducing Mr. Bigge to so horrible a pitch of boredom that that clever young man drank himself to sleep, rolled under the sofa, could not be waked, and stayed there until morning.

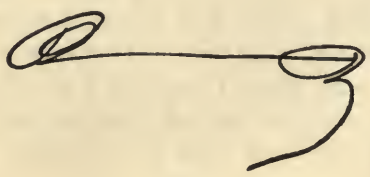
CHAPTER XVI

CATEATON'S BANK

IT was not long after this that Jamie received a letter which astonished him. He turned it over and over, read and re-read it. Mr. J. K. Lawrie it was addressed to: but what had he to do with Cateaton's Bank? Tom, he knew, had an account there: but J. K. could not be taken to mean Thomas, and Mr. J. K. Lawrie was requested to visit the manager at five-thirty on the following Wednesday. His first impulse was to take the letter to Tom and ask him if he knew anything about it, but the brothers were secret with each other and kept their affairs to themselves, their mother being the clearing-house for such information as concerned the family. Then he thought that perhaps Cateaton's Bank wished to have his account which he had just placed with the Thrigsby and District, but banks do not go out of their way to capture insignificant little private accounts. Banks were very alarming institutions, and Cateaton's was *the* bank of Thrigsby, exclusive as the Portico Club, transacting its business in one of the finest mansions in Morley Street, that noble thoroughfare which had at one time been Thrigsby's Park Lane. Old Elias Cateaton was dead, worth two hundred thousand pounds, and his family died with him. The Keiths and the Greigs had banked with him: they said they had made him, though Elias used to declare that he had made them. "They had brains," he used to say, "but I had brains

and brass."—It was with awe then that Jamie on that Wednesday walked down Morley Street, which is a dignified street, one of those streets that nobody who is not somebody can walk down without unease. The windows of the houses were so big: such portly gentlemen were to be seen through them, such handsome apartments. No shadow of poverty could fall upon Morley Street. Poverty? In the richest town in the North of England? With a street like Morley Street if there are poor people in the place it must be their own fault. Jamie found Morley Street convincing. Morley Street he knew had justified itself: Morley Street had fought the battle of the people's bread. After that victory there was no excuse for poverty. The rich men had grown so rich that they no longer lived in Morley Street, but they had their clubs there and their mansions were now their offices and their warehouses were removed to lower places.

Cateaton's Bank had a forbidding appearance. Its entrance was as awful as that of a club, and it had a porter as dreadful. Jamie dared not pass him.—"He must know a rich man when he sees one," he thought. "He'll know me from my hat to my boots for a poor man's son." However, the bells of a church striking half-past five drove him through the doors past the porter and he asked to see the manager. The clerks had gone home and it was the manager himself whom he addressed, Mr. Rigby Blair, who in his letter giving the appointment had written his name thus



so that Jamie was unaware of his name.—"Mr. Lawrie?" he said.—"My name is Lawrie."—"Mr. J. K. Lawrie?" —They went into the manager's parlour, a most gentlemanly place, and there in a fat voice, such a voice as Peter might use in welcoming a saint into Heaven, Mr. Rigby Blair, who by the light of his lamp was revealed as a pink, plump, white-haired little cherub, offered Mr. J. K. Lawrie a position in the bank as a senior clerk at a salary half as much again as that given him by his uncle for his services at the mill.—"It—I must think it over," said Jamie, and the cherub's feelings were obviously hurt. Think over an offer of a stool in Cateaton's! Think! A man was made for life who got into Cateaton's. Think! Why, fifty young men would offer themselves to fill one vacancy. No one ever got there without influence.—"I mean," said Jamie, "I had not thought of it."—"I thought your friends would have prepared you," said the cherub.—"My friends?"—"Mr. Donald Greig," breathed the cherub, and again he was like Peter referring to the Greater One inside, "Mr. Donald Greig gave me to understand that he would propose the matter to you."—Jamie began to understand that there was nothing supernatural in the experience he was going through.—"You must let me show you the bank," said the cherub, taking up a bunch of keys, and off he trotted with Jamie striding behind, with his hand thrust into the breast of his waistcoat, a trick he had caught from Hubert, and used whenever his shyness forced him to stand on his dignity. He was shown the shining counter; the stool where he would sit in the clerks' office.—"Most interesting work, most interesting," chattered the cherub. "Money makes the world go round, you know. Nothing done without money." They visited the strong-room and the vault.—"Half the

family plate in Thrigsby lies here."—"Very impressive," remarked Jamie.—"There," said Mr. Blair, letting the heavy iron door slam to. "There! You have been in business, I understand."—"The last few years," replied Jamie. "Cotton."—"Ah! the fortunes I have seen made in cotton: but terribly insecure, terrible, terrible."—"Banks fail too, don't they?" asked Jamie.—"*We* don't fail. I hope you'll come to us, Mr. Lawrie, and—who knows?—perhaps you will some day slip into my shoes, though—ha! ha!—they would be a trifle small for you."—Jamie liked the little man so much, and he liked the quiet gentlemanly atmosphere of the bank. For once in a way he had felt sure of himself. He knew that the matter did not really need thinking over. He would be free of the mill: delivered from the daily double train journey, from the mill-hands, of whom he could never decide whether they were better or worse than himself. He would have more money, more leisure, and need not rise so early in the morning. Tibby need not rise so early either. (She always said it took a good half-hour to wake him up.) That thought settled it. He told Mr. Blair he would have great pleasure in accepting the position, but must give notice to his present firm.—"Of course, of course. The stool shall be kept ready until you come to put a shine on it and your breeches. Ha! Ha!"—"I sit like a rock," said Jamie, rolling his "r" at his most Scots, for he had begun to be excited. He felt as though all his problems were settled. There was an end of his exile. It was wonderful, splendid. He shook hands with Mr. Blair three times. Outside the porter was waiting to shut the big outer door. Jamie shook hands with him too.—"I'm coming to work here," he said.—"Yes, sir," said the porter. "I'm very pleased, sir."—"Pleased? I am

that," cried Jamie, and "Losh!" he said to himself, "there'll be no stopping me now."

Then he remembered the mention of Donald Greig, and how easy and full life had become since his meeting with Hubert. O! Hubert was the kindest man. It must have been Hubert, to think of such a thing; dull, heavy Donald could not have thought of it by himself. It was amazing how Hubert illuminated everything he touched so that it became comprehensible and ceased to be oppressive. Hubert's rooms were only just round the corner. Jamie rushed up, burst in on his cousin, roaring, "I'm a banker. I'm a banker, I'm——"—"You'll turn into a parrot if you don't calm down," said Hubert. "A banker is one who borrows or lends money for a consideration. I'm not sure that it isn't a disgraceful trade which would much better have been left to the Jews."—"Well," said Jamie, "I'm in a bank, and my immortal soul is saved: a bank, in Morley Street, and I have you to thank for it."—"Not at all," said Hubert. "If you have anybody to thank, it is your mother."—"My mother?"—"Yes. Are you always going to let her fight your battles for you?"—"My mother? Do you mean she went to Donald?"—"I only mean what I say."—Hubert had begun to enjoy the mistake and Jamie's confusion. He said: "My only suggestion to you is one that she would not approve. How would you like to write on *The Critic?*"—Truly the heavens had burst upon the earth that day.—"We don't want love poems," said Hubert.—"No-o-o."—"Nor epic poems, nor dramatic poems, nor descriptive poems. 'Bosky' and 'lush' are barred. Nor religious poems, nor poems about your emotions in your more solitary moments. Solitary moments are a man's own fault, his private particular hell, and the less said about them the better. If you can't

write anything but those different kinds of poems, try prose."—"I'd write myself to death," cried Jamie, "if I thought I could do a thing would please you."—"O! I'm easily pleased," said Hubert. "I'm only an amateur. It's the professional Currie Bigge you have to please, not me. I'm busy now. Run home with your news. Don't say you've seen me. I have an idea your mother has the usual Keith view of my character."—"But I'll tell her what you are."—"She knows what I am; at least she knows how I look in the world according to her, and she is not going to alter that."—"I say she shall. I say the world that condemns you must be brought to its senses."—Hubert smiled: "My dear James," he said, "if you can bring yourself to your senses it will be as much as you can accomplish." And at once the stream of ecstasy in Jamie rushed through him, with his mind labouring after it, seeing the dim promise of blinding visions and crying to his soul: "There, there lies the summit of thy well-being!"—Hubert bundled him out and was sorry in a moment when he heard the young man leaping down the stairs. He should have let him stay until he had found some emotional satisfaction. It was too late now, though. Jamie must be let go with his dangerous exaltation, which, on the whole, though he admired it, Hubert disliked. It was too delicate a thing for him to find amusement in it. If only Jamie had been a woman! He roused his cousin's chivalry, only to have it done to death with mockery.—"It only needed that," mused Hubert, "to put the cap on the comedy of our invasion of England. I am tired of it all, an' 'twere not for Jamie Lawrie, I would lay me doon an' die."

On his way home Jamie had to pass the theatre. He stopped outside it and studied the bills. The play that

night was to be *Richard II.*, with Mr. Gaylor from a London theatre in the principal part. Another bill set forth Mr. Gaylor's achievements, and various printed opinions on them.—"I'll take Tibby," thought Jamie. "I'll go to see a play. I'll see Mr. Wilcox."—He looked to see if Mr. Wilcox was in the bill. Yes.—"I'll celebrate the occasion. I must celebrate it; and I'll take Tibby." He walked in and bought two seats in the stalls, and as he came out again looked to right and left to make sure he had not been seen. Then he thought he had made a fool of himself, but he was getting used to that and was no longer inclined to despair over it. He was worried when he thought that Tibby might not be able to come out, and he would have wasted all those shillings. At a furious pace he walked home, working off his excitement, half sorry to let it go, half dreading lest it should still be apparent when he got home. It would never do to be excited in front of Tom, who would be ready with one of his sneers, though, he thought, it would be pleasant if he could let his mother see how glad he was about it. He felt so tender towards them all, even to Tom, who was, after all, reliable. You could always depend on Tom, as, of course, old Andrew had found. That brought Andrew into Jamie's mood and him he did not regret. He certainly had made himself a big man, and his pride must have suffered terribly when his wife left him. And Hubert! Jamie was astonished to find that there was room for both Andrew and Hubert in the same mental circle. He had always kept them rigidly apart. Now thinking of them together, he found that each had gained something, while his own excitement was eased and he felt that he had made a discovery, though what the exact nature of it was he did not know. He was suddenly pleased with

everything he saw and with everyone. He smiled on an old woman coming out of a gin-shop with a bottle under her apron, and she said a fine young man like him ought not to be without a sweetheart.—"Will you find me one?" he asked.—"Open your mouth and shut your eyes and see what God'll send you." She gave him a leer and an ogle and said that sweethearts did not want finding, not for a fine young man like him. That encounter made Jamie feel still more pleased with himself and he began to look for sweethearts and was amazed at the number available, all ready and willing. —"Dear me," he thought, "and I have always been so terribly afraid of them."—Bright eyes of girls and women made him very happy, and he remembered *Green grow the rashes, O!* and for the first time perceived the full-throated chuckle that comes up through the verses:

"The sweetest hours that e'er I spent,
Were spent among the lasses, O!"

When he reached home there was no one in the house but Tibby. Her ugliness resisted his delight in bright eyes and he felt immensely sorry for her. He remembered how he had kissed her on the road outside Kirkcudbright. The years had not been kind to her. Her face was more rugged for its thinness and pallor. Her body was thin too, though strong: but a bad man or a boy would laugh at her. Her hair at the back would rouse interest: a man might hurry to catch her up in the street: when he saw her face he would walk faster than ever. She had the air as she stood there in her kitchen of being huddled over herself, of withdrawing, of taking advantage of her repellent face to live within herself, to live and watch and pray. Bird-like

she was, like a strong wild bird. She made Jamie feel weak and almost ashamed of his pleasure in bright eyes. She made him feel for a moment that his Self was unimportant and not a thing to be pleased with or despondent about. Then into her strange rugged face, as though she had seen into him and divined his young folly, there crept a little tender pitying smile. Jamie said:—"I'm glad you're alone, Tibby."—"I'm used to it," said she.—"I've news for you. I've got an appointment in a bank."—"That's news indeed, and good."—"I'll no have to rise from my bed so early."—"You'll relish that. You love your bed."—"I do that. Tibby, do you ever go out?"—"For the marketing, and a breath of air sometimes, not that there's much air in this place."—"Aye, it is not like home."—"It is not."—"Will you—will you come out with me to-night, to the play?"—"To the play?" Tibby's eyes sparkled.—"Have you never seen a play?"—"Never. My father would tell me of plays he saw in Edinburgh, with murders and ghosts, and poor women nearly rattled out of their wits with the wickedness of men."—"Men aren't so wicked, Tibby."—"They're a conceited lot."—"But, Tibby, will you?"—"And leave the house empty?"—"John will be in soon."—She turned and faced him.—"It will be deceiving Mrs. Lawrie."—"Aye," said Jamie, "for a little pleasure."—"Then you'll deceive her for the big ones."—"Not I." Tibby thought of Margaret having Jamie's pockets turned out, and, as she really wanted to go, and would not for the world miss an opportunity of being with Jamie, she satisfied her conscience with that tit-for-tat. They had tea together in the kitchen, washed up after it, and stole out by the back door as John came in by the front.

It was a great adventure for both of them. Jamie

had a shock. As they walked he began to explain the play to Tibby, only to find that she had read it. Then he discovered that she had read most of his books, taking them up as he laid them down—and only reading those which, by the marks, he had finished.—"She ought not to be a servant," he thought, and Tibby at the same time was thinking—"He's too good for a bank."—"It's a shame," said he, "that you should be so much alone." —"Mrs. Lawrie is vera good to me and lets me talk when I want to talk. She's no talker herself and is glad to hear a word now and then when you're all away and the house is so still."—That came home to Jamie too. He had never before thought what the house must be like with himself and his brothers out of it all day long. He imagined an impossible desolation.—"When I'm at the bank," he said, "I'll be home by five."— "You'll have time then to be your own man awhile."— "Yes, I'm going to write."—"I knew that," said she, and he became rather afraid of her. What was there that she didn't know? He sounded her as to her knowledge of the family and she had it all pat, even the ramifications of Greig and Allison-Greig. He tried another tack:—"Tibby, sometimes this place gives me a sense of appalling disaster. I feel as though God must visit it with an earthquake as He did Lisbon."—"No," replied she, "if He were going to do that He would have given it more blessings."—She seemed almost wonderful to Jamie then, but as she worked in the kitchen of his house, and, according to the faith of his upbringing, had no right to be alive at all, being a bastard, he could not admit her wonder and regarded her, instead, with amused indulgence, and unconsciously borrowed from Hubert the attitude which that kindly tease had for himself.

They entered the play-house and took their seats.

In those days star-actors from London visited the provinces for a day or two at a time and gave the familiar performances to which the stock company had with very few rehearsals to adapt themselves as best they could. Mr. Gaylor was a bad actor but a fine elocutionist; however, for Jamie and Tibby, it being their first visit to a play-house, all was wonderful. They gazed into another brilliant world, where superhuman, brilliant figures moved, and spoke from their hearts the grief, the sorrow, the anger, the pride, the despair, the baseness, and the rare, wise tenderness that were in them. Mr. Wilcox was the gardener, but it was only towards the end of his scene with the Queen that Jamie recognised him and then he was distressed by this intrusion of an ordinary human being whom he had known at a desk in an office, eating and drinking, even drunk. But soon he was flattered too. It gave him a human, sentimental share in that marvellous world, but his pleasure in it was not so keen as when it had been a miraculous, living and changing creation, remote from himself, as remote as a true poem, like *Endymion,* or a beautiful woman, like Agnes of the lake. He was disappointed and began to criticise, to notice defects in the scenery, which was shabby, and in the dresses, which were tawdry. The face of a girl in attendance on the Queen was familiar though he could not recognise it. In the interval before the fifth act, its association came back to him. It was Selina Leslie. Selina on the stage! He had heard nothing of it. Did Tibby know?—"That's two months ago, now. It has been a sore grief to Mrs. Leslie, who is a good body."—"That she is," said Jamie. —"It was Miss Selina's good looks. There was this man and that man telling her how pretty she was and

then nothing was good enough for her at home: though I must say a family as large as that is a trial. One fine morning she was gone. They found her, but nothing would induce her to come back. She'd been taken to the theatre a good deal and it turned her head. There were queans on the stage more beautiful than herself." —"She was more beautiful than that Queen," said Jamie. "And is Mrs. Leslie——? She can't be unforgiving."—"Oh! no. I think Mrs. Leslie sees her, but Mr. Leslie will not have her name spoken in his presence."—"I knew Mrs. Leslie would not be hard," said Jamie. The curtain went up and a man in front of them who had a book in his hand turned and said testily: "Will you be silent, sir?"

Mr. Wilcox had seen Jamie in the auditorium and had dressed quickly and was waiting outside for him. "You've come at last, my boy," he said.—"Yes," said Jamie, "at last, and I am sorry it was not sooner."—"It *is* all prejudice," said Mr. Wilcox, "about the theatre being wicked, isn't it? It's a lovely part, the gardener." —"And you did it very well, didn't he, Tibby?"—"Very well indeed," said Tibby shyly. Mr. Wilcox had glanced at her but had taken no further interest. "You must come again, my boy," he said, "and we'll have that prologue out of you yet."—"I don't know about that," replied Jamie, "but I'll come again, and I'd like to see you in your lodgings."—"Oh! I'm moved from there. The flesh-pots ran dry and a poor player must live where he may." He gave his address, sighted another friend in the thin stream of people coming from the house and was off.—"That's one of the best friends I ever had," said Jamie. Tibby replied rather spitefully: "It is nice of you to own to him. There's not many

who would."—"Why not?" he asked and she would not give any answer.

She had enjoyed the play, though it had not contained enough murders for her and she thought that John o' Gaunt had talked a deal too much for a dying man. It had been to her nothing but mummery and Jamie, to whom it had been an experience, was rather annoyed with her. He relapsed into silence and harked back to the amazing pleasure the first acts had been to him before he had recognised Mr. Wilcox and been brought down to earth.—"Would you like to go again?" he asked.—"In six months' time," said she. And that annoyed him too for he would have liked her to want it all over again at once.—"It was not so good," said Tibby, "as my father's telling of plays."—"Do you measure everything by your father?" asked Jamie.—"Aye, everything."

They had reached Murray Street and arranged that Tibby should go in at once by the back door while he should wait for a quarter of an hour and then go in by the front door. The stratagem succeeded. Margaret swallowed Tibby's fiction and did not question her son, for she had been schooled by Tom into not inquiring into his ways of spending the evenings when he was out. —Jamie said: "I've news for you, Mother."—"News? What news? Good, I hope."—"The best I've had yet. Will you guess?"—"I will not. It's late."—"Then—I've been offered a post in Cateaton's Bank, and I've accepted it."—"Leave—the—mill?"—"Aye."—"After all your uncle has done for you?"—"There's thousands could do my work at the mill."—"And thousands could do what you'll have to do at the bank."—"You're not displeased, Mother? Why, I thought——" He was

puzzled. He had thought she had waited up to be alone with him, to see how glad he was of what she had done for him.—"I thought you knew," he said.—"How should I know?"—"It was Donald Greig got me in."—"I think you should have consulted me before you accepted."—"It's a better salary and it's safe. I can give you ten pounds at once for the fund."—Margaret was mollified. It was the first time Jamie had acknowledged her ambition to pay back all she had had in charity. Truth to tell he could neither understand nor sympathise with her desire. He was free with his money and knew nothing of borrowing or lending. When there was need he would give and had he been in need himself would have accepted. And having made his offer, he regretted it, for it seemed to him almost like buying her approval.—"I do not think," she said, "the Greigs will be able to do more for you than the Keiths. After all, you are a Keith and owe some loyalty to the family."—"I'm a Lawrie first," said he, "and that I'll never forget."—"Your uncle will be very hurt."—"Not he. He has his Tom, and I think John was right when he said there was only room for Tom. There are times when I think there's only room for Tom in the whole wide world. And I'm sure he thinks so."—Margaret said tartly: "Tom is the only good Keith among you." And with that she went to her bed where she lay awake shaken with hatred of a world which would not be shaped to her ends or her liking.

When Tom heard the news in the morning from his mother's lips he said:—"Dang me. I'll have to move my account. I won't have it made up by my own brother."—"Is it really a good position?"—"To be in a bank," said Tom, "is to be near money, and if a man

can't turn it in his own direction he's a fool."—He gulped down his breakfast of porridge and honey and rushed away to the office. That very afternoon he transferred his account to the Thrigsby and District.

CHAPTER XVII

SELINA LESLIE

ONCE installed at the bank, Jamie felt, as Tibby had foretold, his own man. Banking was a gentlemanly and a cloistered business. Its hours of work were regular and short; once a month there was a late night and twice a year there was "balancing," which meant working into the small hours, but there were no sudden inflations or depressions. Thrigsby might be and generally was feverish and excited, but the bank was calm and dignified. It could and did break quite important people with the remorselessness of a machine; a man without credit did not exist for it. Like a church it had powers of excommunication. It was very like a church and men like Mr. Rigby Blair came to it in a religious spirit, and this had its effect upon Jamie, who began to regard Sunday as a day of rest and relaxation rather than as a day of worship, though he still accompanied his mother to church and regularly placed a shilling in the bag passed round by Peter Leslie. Yet the ceremony of offering the money so collected to God seemed to him inappropriate. The God of that church was not the God of the bank. This was the beginning of his perception that there are Gods and Gods and that men make them in their image as they go. He was made rather unhappy at first and was left rather sadly

envious of his mother, whose God was perfectly definite and was able to provide for every contingency except free, spontaneous human desire, for which no provision whatever was made. It was easy enough for Margaret, who had no life except in her sons and no traffic with the world outside, but while the God of her church was served with righteous conduct and the support of marriage and the family—thieving and murder being out of the question for respectable people—the God of the bank was served with lies. In business Jamie never met a man who did not begin by lying and then allowing himself reluctantly to be brought back to such truth as was necessary for the transaction in hand, so that though there was always an air of importance, there was, in fact, very little done. Indeed all the responsible persons he knew worked as long and as little as possible, while the rest had punctuality both in coming and in leaving for almost their only virtue. However, Jamie supposed it was all right and did not look closely into the matter, but, being forced to admit his own discomfort, he sought the means of relieving it in literary and mental activity and in the company of people who really were interested in what they were doing, with no consideration for what they might get out of it. Pressure at home had much to do with this desire of his. Tom and his mother were magnificently virtuous. *They* were Keiths; *they* had remained true to the family; *they* were rewarded; *they* had kept the family intact; James and John had strayed from the fold, they had sold themselves into bondage and were the servants of strangers; in short, Tom's salary was doubled and he was in charge of a department, he had put down a hundred pounds for the fund, when he heard that Jamie had contributed ten; Thrigsby had begun to hear of Tom, who was a member of two

clubs.—Jamie joined the Literary and Philosophical Society, through Hubert, and discovered that there were brains also in Thrigsby; an illustrious chemist, a famous musician, and a queer little man who had measured the velocity of a particle of hydrogen. Through this association he discovered that Newton had other claims to fame and the gratitude of mankind than the possession of a dog called Diamond. But the philosophers were too disinterested for Jamie; they were an intolerant and inconsiderate set and they might as well have lived on a mountain as in Thrigsby for all they cared about it; and Thrigsby had become fascinating and absorbing to him in the security and freedom he found in his new gentlemanly occupation. However, from contact with these great minds he learned that problems and questions which teased and tickled his mind were realities to them. He also learned that nothing was settled, that very little was known, that there might be other more plausible theories concerning the origin of the world than that set forth with such beautiful simplicity in Genesis. Jamie could not accept the fact of human ignorance from Hubert, but when he was confronted with the austere probity of these men he could not rid his mind of it and was obsessed by it, for he argued that if men really had divinely inspired knowledge they had made singularly little use of it if they could not rise above the brutality of Thrigsby. Life in Thrigsby was brutal; there was no getting away from that. Machines were carefully and lovingly tended, but no one looked after the men and women, who came pouring into the place from the country, and, apparently, from all parts of the world, for in the streets could be heard almost every European language, and there were churches, synagogues, basilicas, mosques, chapels, English, Welsh and

Scotch, and everywhere there were houses being built, on marshes, on slap-heaps, and on filled-in brooks and little rivers, over graveyards and places that for generations had been avoided as containing plague-pits. Thrigsby absorbed them all; grew immense factories for them to work in and little houses for them to live in, blotting out gardens, fields, woods, spinneys, leaving nowhere any open space, not even in the centre of the town, until Thrigsby in its municipal pride decided that it needed a new town hall and discovered that it had nowhere to put it. Andrew Keith had a say in that matter and won a brief and unpleasant notoriety by intriguing for the selection of a plot of land which meant pulling down one of his warehouses for which he was most generously compensated.—"We will have," said Thrigsby, "the biggest Town Hall in the North of England." And in the course of a year or two Thrigsby had its desire in a vast Gothic structure with an immense tower, with a four-faced clock, a bell which would be heard on the wind for at least five miles, and a spiked golden ball on top. The Town Hall was opened by a Great Personage: the mayor was knighted. A day or two later a sea-gull spiked itself on the golden ball and created through the town a sensation greater than had been known since a woman killed her baby and hid its body under the kitchen hearth. Thousands of Thrigsbeians who had never moved out of their ordinary path to see the Town Hall itself, thronged the new square day after day to see the dead bird hanging there. And out of that dead bird grew modern Thrigsby, a city aware of itself. It and Jamie became aware of themselves about the same time and he realised that he was definitely antagonistic to it. At first he was acutely miserable and thought that he must fly, but very soon he

was good-humoured about it, wrestled with himself, decided that Thrigsby was by force of circumstance—since he could not leave his mother—the scene of the adventure of his life and that he must see it through. He was not going to surrender his mother altogether to Tom. He could make her laugh and Tom would never even try to do that. He wrote a satirical little poem on the sea-gull for *The Critic,* but it was rather obscure in its hint of the soul of the place being impaled upon its pretensions, so that it was neither understood nor gave offence. Hubert liked it, however, but told the author that he was too young yet to be thinking of dead souls and appointed him to do dramatic criticism. Here was work that Jamie loved. He measured all that he saw by that first delirious impression when delight had run through his veins, and though he was drastic, he was witty and charming. *Quintus Flumen* became a name that stood for something in Thrigsby. There was a battle royal over it with Margaret, who was pleased that her son should be talked about but horrified by his being connected with the theatre, an abode of the Devil, who was an even more real personage to her than God. —"It is the straight road to Hell," she said. "It is the glittering gate thereof."—"But I am trying to persuade my readers," said Jamie, "to regard it as a glimpse of Heaven."—"Nothing," replied she, "can make wrong right, good of a painted mummery."—"It is only a kind of picture," he argued, "a picture in which you see living men and women and hear the spoken living word." —"Men and women," cried Margaret, "making an indecent exhibition of themselves. Say that and you have said all you need to say."—"Read what I have said, mother."—"In that scoundrel's paper?" She went further. She said:—"How can you ever offer yourself to

a good woman, coming as you do from that sink of iniquity? How can you come to me, your mother?"—Jamie smiled at her extravagance. "Indeed, mother, I do come to you with more love in my heart for what my eyes have seen and my ears heard."—"Bah! You talk as though it were a church."—"So it is indeed, a place where the heart can be glad."—"Lewd!" she snapped. "You are too free, Jamie, free in your talk and in your doings. You are changed altogether since you left the mill and I knew how it would be." She took refuge in tears.—"Oh! Lord," he said to himself. "What does she think a man is made of? Stone? Putty? Clay? Why won't she see that her church is only a kind of play-house; mummery without paint, a mummery that deadens life and not quickens it."—"Oh! mother, mother, mother," he cried. "Why can't you let me be? I am what I am and you are no longer responsible for me."—"I am responsible for you," she said, "for ever and ever; responsible to the sainted dead and before God."—"By whom all things are forgiven," he said gently.—"Not deliberate wickedness, not a wanton breach between a mother and a son."—"All things," cried he. "What authority have you for thinking less?"—"I feel it," said she and not another word could he get out of her, and she spent the evening hunting through the Bible for texts to fortify her position. She was inexhaustibly ingenious in that pursuit and Jamie, knowing that he would be routed as he had no hope of finding a text in support of dramatic criticism, left her to it.

All the same these disputes with his mother were the profoundest emotional experiences of that stage of his life and they were precious to her too and she had far more satisfaction in them than in all her approbation of Tom, who never by any chance did anything unexpected

or irregular, or, if he did, kept it hidden, even from himself.

Jamie sought out Selina Leslie at the theatre. He was admitted to her dressing-room, for the management courted him and always forgave his unfavourable comments in the hope of praise. He had made an approving remark of Selina's work in a farce and she had been promoted. She welcomed him warmly:—"Been in front to-night, Quint?"—"No, I have been at home."—"Home?" She made a face. "No place like it, is there?"—"Oh! Are you wanting to go back?"—"Not I! I've my mother to come and see me and that's all I care for, though I don't like my father treating me as though I'd gone on the streets."—"He doesn't think that really."—"No. He'd die if he did. No, he wouldn't. He'd wash his hands of me and be holier than ever. I do wish you'd shave those whiskers off, Quint. They don't suit you a bit."—"I like them. I like to sit and hear them growing."—She laughed: "Don't grow a moustache then. I wouldn't have you hide your beautiful mouth for worlds. You are a treat for sore eyes, really, and I do want to know what you've done to yourself because I used not to be able to talk to you at all."—"We were both so young and both afraid. Besides we thought we were in love with each other when we weren't a bit."—"How do you know that?" Selina had fine eyes and knew how to use them. Jamie met them full and his blood throbbed in his heart.—"It's true," he said. Selina was satisfied with the effect she had produced and did not press the matter further.—"Shall I ever be an actress, Quint?"—"Yes, for comedy. Broaden out a bit."—"I'll keep my figure as long as I can."—"That isn't what I meant: coarsen your methods and you would be first-rate in farce or burlesque. I think burlesque is what

our stage is best in. We've lost the tragic note."—"How do you mean, lost it?"—"That comes clean out of the human heart at its bravest," he said. "We aren't brave any more. We have lost confidence."—"It isn't such a rotten world as all that," said Selina.—"Much you know about it, my child."—"Child? I'm a wicked woman. What's more, I'm going to be wickeder." And she gave a little dance, that was indescribably voluptuous, so swift and subtle was the flicker of defiance and desire in it.—"You wait," she said, "until I get to London. I shall set my cap at the Prince of Wales, poor lamb."—"Why poor lamb?" asked Jamie, delighted by this audacious flight.—"The Prince Consort is so like father," said Selina. "Can't you see him creeping under the royal table picking up crumbs? I think father must be a German and no Scotchman."—"The Scotch," said Jamie, "are the only Continental inhabitants of these islands. That is why the English cannot get on without them."—"I'm English," said Selina, and Jamie, wanting to rouse the devil in her again, said:—"And you can't get on without me?"—"Well," said Selina, "it would be nice if I took you to London with me."—"And what would I do there?"—"Come here," said Selina. He obeyed and she made him stand in front of the mirror with his face next to hers.—"There," she said, "London doesn't often see a couple like that."—"Your face looks crooked to me."—"So does yours to me. Ha! Ha! Ha!"—"And I'd be a dull dog for you to drag about with you."—She put her arm round his neck:—"You are rather a dull old darling," she said, and kissed him, and in a moment he had her in his arms: "Selina! Selina!"—But she had no thought of surrender:—"Quiet! Quiet!" she whispered. "There! There!" She soothed him. He was enraged and appalled by the convulsion

in his feelings, and broke from her. At the door he turned and saw her smile at herself in her mirror. O! the brightness of her eyes!—As he left the theatre he said to himself:—"Felt Alexander so? Was it so that Antony was enchained by Cleopatra?"—It was no release of his emotions, but rather a confinement of them, and he in whom emotions had always been so free, so pure, suffered. It was torture. What his mother had said of the theatre seemed to him now not a whit too extravagant. It had magnified Selina's attraction a thousand times. She was now, for him, what she had never been in his life, a definite and dangerous actuality. He blamed himself, not her. It was he who had admitted her, encouraged her. The danger was so immense that he could not ignore it. Danger to her too, he thought, in his ignorance of women and their knowledge of their own power and peril, and he must save her. The obvious way of doing it, by not seeing her again, never crossed his mind. Saving her, whether she liked it or not, was a positive task to which he felt himself committed. He even prayed to the God of the church for assistance and strength, never dreaming that the God of the bank was much more to Selina's liking. She was paid very little and had discovered that the male sex had deep and well-lined pockets into which it seemed to give them pleasure for her to dip, and she had no doubt but that Jamie, being a Keith and a friend of Hubert Greig's, had pockets as accommodating as any. Also he was better-looking than the most of her friends. As for his being in love with her, that was incidental. She could hardly remember a time when she had not had some man more or less in love with her and she regarded it as the normal condition of a young woman's existence. Sometimes she let them kiss her; sometimes she kissed them; such flir-

tation kept a flickering zest in her life. She had only one determination—not to marry a man like her father and not to have a large family. She did not imagine that other people's lives were very different from her own or that the men she met would desire other than to stroll into and out of her gay existence; for she was extremely happy and only wished to avoid trouble. As for Jamie, he was still something of the hero he had been to her as a child. He had grown very big and strong and pleasing to her eyes. He had left bruises on her arms and she surveyed them with satisfaction and pressed them until they hurt her for the pleasure of pain coming from him, and she was sorry when they had disappeared. . . . Some months before Jamie's visit, a star actor, who had been engaged for three weeks with the company, had seduced her with a promise that she should go back to London with him. He did not keep his promise and she regretted the loss of the opportunity more than that of her virginity, which put an end to her curiosity about men and made her think that she knew all about them.

Jamie took some weeks to think out the problem she had introduced into his life and did not go near her. Though she preferred him above all other men she did not allow him to be without a rival and encouraged the attentions of a new addition to the company, a strange pale young man, named Henry Acomb, who was the butt of all the actors because of his mannerisms, and used to come to her almost in tears and tell her what a genius he had and how they would one day be on their knees to him when he had all London at his feet. He was not peculiar in his convictions but only in his frankness in avowing them, and though he was often extremely tiresome Selina believed in him and was sorry

for him. He used to inveigh against the rest of the actors for accepting the disreputable position assigned to them:—"Is not a man an actor by virtue of the fiery soul within him? Is not he in himself a living vision, noble in speech, grand in gesture?"—Jamie had written words of warm appreciation of Acomb's strange performances, and the actor carried them about with him and declared that Quintus Flumen was the only man in Thrigsby, and that before he left the filthy town he would like to shake hands with him. He had quarrelled with Mr. Wilcox, but when he learned that Mr. Wilcox knew Quintus he made it up with him and begged for a meeting to be arranged. Mr. Wilcox however thought Acomb an intolerable bore and a dangerous innovator—had he not spoken slightingly of Kemble?—and would not inflict him on his friend.

However, Acomb had his desire and met Jamie in Selina's rooms where she lived under the wing of Mrs. Bulloch who played Shakespearean old women to the life because she was a Shakespearean old woman in herself, though a most respectable party and a most excellent grandmother.—"My dear," she used to say to Selina, "if I wasn't thinking of your success I would say to you, Don't marry in the profession. It isn't marriage. It is a perpetual wondering whose bed he has come from. But if you marry outside the profession then it is all U.P. and you won't know the prompt from the O.P. side of your life. But a good-looking beau like that Mr. Lawrie is a temptation to any girl, if only to keep him safe from the married women."—"Oh! cheese it, Aunty," said Selina. "He's a good young man with a mother that you'd need a heart of brass to make your in-law."—"Then he's a parable," said Mrs. Bulloch, "if he is good-looking and good."—She had only seen him

at the theatre and now, glancing out of the window, she saw him coming up the steps and gave a little scream: "And if he isn't there before my very eyes, and barmy Henry coming to tea and all."—"My mother is coming too."—"My stars and little fishes if it ain't a party! I must squeeze into my bombazine though it does burst open at my bosom."—And the old lady trotted upstairs.

Selina composed herself and sat with her hands in her lap with her eyes gazing down at them. Jamie entered. He was tragical and solemn.—"Selina," he said, "I ought not to have come, I know, but I felt that at least I must ask your pardon."—"Pardon?" said she, looking up at him and causing him to shake in his resolution, which was to denounce himself and never see her again. "Pardon? Why?"—"I—I kissed you."—"So you did years ago. But you never asked my pardon then."—"That was different, and you know it."—"No. I don't think I do."—"Then you—then you——" He struggled hard against the realisation being forced upon him that she had liked it. O! he must save her! On an impulse he said: "I want to ask you to give up the theatre and then I will m-marry you."—Selina rose from her chair and laid her arm on the mantelpiece, drooped in a dignified attitude and asked him if he knew what he was saying. As he hardly did he could make no answer. He had been giving himself a terrible time, which was more credit to his morals than to his good sense, and, as usual, he had complicated his condition with general ideas and had borrowed from Hubert's rooms a book by Mary Wollstonecraft which had fired his idealism but had not eased his real difficulty, namely, that Scotchmen who come to England to make careers do not marry actresses. He had evaded it by putting marriage out of the question, and here it had asserted itself when it

became a matter of making an honest woman of Selina or leaving her to her fate stained with his own embrace. It was all very serious to him and he could not but believe it was equally serious to Selina. He wanted an answer and she was not prepared to give one. Love to her was a matter of action, of active enjoyment, not of words, and so far as she had considered Jamie's abstention at all, she had put it down to his liking someone else better. She had a respect for him and his present proposals had impaired that. He on his part had recoiled. Marriage was a thing that required careful consideration and here he had rushed at it without a thought. In spite of Mary Wollstonecraft he could not get rid of this notion that women from fifteen to forty-five think of nothing whatever but marriage. He had proposed marriage and Selina had been almost shocked at the suggestion. Perhaps he had been too abrupt, or lacking in chivalry. Women, he thought, must be sensitive in these matters. But then he had kissed Selina. He floundered into worse confusion.—"Damn it all," he cried at length, "you might give me an answer." And Selina, refreshed and relieved by this vigorous outburst, replied sweetly: "I'm damned if I do."—Jamie dropped down into a chair as though she had pushed him. He gasped in his astonishment but was saved more by the entrance of Mrs. Leslie, who, seeing him, raised her hands in delight, darted to him, kissed him on both cheeks and, with a more than usually shrill giggle, cried: "He! He! Jamie! You have come to see my poor girl! How good of you! How kind of you! She has shown me the nice things you have written about her, but I never thought you would come to see her, now that you are so rich and famous, and everybody talking about you and saying how rich you are and how clever.

People do forget old friends, you know, and it is no good pretending they don't. Not that I would blame anybody about poor Selina. When her own father won't let her name pass his lips."—"Oh! do leave the poor man alone, mother," said Selina.—"I am sorry to hear that of Mr. Leslie," said Jamie. "There are exceptions even among women."—"He! He! Jamie, that is just what I have said time and time again. If you have a lot of children one of them is sure to be a little mad."—"Oh! mother, do stop talking. Father thinks if a person goes on the stage she gets off the earth. You don't think that. Jamie doesn't think that. I don't think that."—"I brought you some shrimps for tea," said Mrs. Leslie. So they sat down to the table. Mrs. Bulloch joined them and the three women talked Jamie out of his confusion into a rattling gaiety. They talked of dress and the price of food, of disease and child-birth and abortions, and Mrs. Bulloch cheerfully told the most gruesome tales. Selina's mamma was a different person: she seemed to be taking a holiday from her gentility and she forced her mood on the rest. Mrs. Bulloch rejoiced in the little woman and said: "It is easy to see where Selina gets her talent from, *and* her spirits. I haven't seen such spirits since my brother Joe went off to the German wars and came back with a broken jaw and no pension, and that was when they put potatoes in the bread and the poor Irish had nothing to eat." —Jamie began to regret that he had been so solemn, and was afraid that he had for ever suppressed Selina's interest in him. She never once looked at him but kept her eyes fixed on her mother, whom presently she took upstairs to see a new bonnet she had bought. Mrs. Bulloch ogled Jamie, and he grinned at her.—"Always," she said, "look at the mother when you are thinking

of the daughter."—"Mrs. Leslie is an old friend of mine," said Jamie.—"A fine young gentleman like you," said Mrs. Bulloch, "doesn't want to marry into the profession, though if you're not looking at it in the marrying way I'd be a dragoon, I would."—Jamie laughed and said he did not think Mrs. Bulloch could ever be very terrifying.—"One of my husbands was a very little man and scared out of his wits. He thought I should overlay him one of these fine nights. A warm little feller he was and I never knew him go to bed with cold feet, which is rare among men. But he knew what the profession was, having been born, like Moses, in a buck-basket, on the road. And he used to say, the profession has its ways and other folks have their ways and they'll no more mix than oil and water. A beautiful girl like Selina must have her beaux, but for anything serious, or, which is more important, satisfactory, she must look to the profession."

It was then that Henry Acomb came in bearing a large bouquet. When he knew that he was in the presence of Quintus Flumen he was so touching, so profuse, so eloquent in his gratitude that he drove Jamie from the house before Selina and her mother had returned. He said: "Your writings have been a revelation to me. It was my own soul speaking. I have often thanked God for Quintus Flumen."—"Yes, yes," replied Jamie reaching out for his hat.—"We must meet again," said Henry Acomb.—"Often, I hope," replied Jamie, and he shook Mrs. Bulloch's hands. She followed him to the door and said: "You mustn't mind him. He's a fine actor but touched, and he is very much gone on Selina who won't have a word to say to him."

CHAPTER XVIII

JOHN'S WEDDING

THE fat man who had urged John to hear John Bright was none other than the manager of Murdoch's—a regrettable coincidence which no true novelist would acknowledge, but as it had its influence on John's career it cannot be avoided. It helped him to a firm belief in minding his own business, and this led him to the discovery that his business must be clear and definite or there was no minding it. What was his business? To make money, marry, produce sons and put them in the way of making themselves distinguished. He flung himself into this undertaking with a cold and irresistible energy, acclaiming and supporting John Bright because the reforms advocated by that great man would make it easier for him and men like him to turn their abilities into gold. When he was twenty-two he chose his wife, and at twenty-six he married her. She had a fortune of six thousand pounds, was not ill-looking and shared his opinion of himself. Other qualities she had but John was not aware of them. Her father lived near the Allison-Greigs and was a connection of theirs and had made his small fortune out of selling pictures by J. M. W. Turner, William Etty and Madox Brown to Angus Greig, who, though he understood nothing about art, thought it proper in a merchant prince

to encourage artists—financially, if not socially. Mr. Sykes had advised the corporation of Thrigsby in the institution of its art gallery and he had a reputation. Wisely he retired before the local painters, whom he had slighted, began to assail him, persuaded Angus to build a museum in Westmoreland, stocked it for him and with the proceeds established himself. His daughter's name was Sophia; she had been brought up to believe in great men. Angus was to her *the* great man, her father was a great man and John had no difficulty in persuading her that the younger generation could do even better in that line. He had become rhetorical, had John, and would tell her of his ambitions, and as she lived with old men whose ambitions were fulfilled or with young men who had none—for the energy of the Allison-Greigs seems to have been exhausted in Angus—she needed no other witchcraft. Truth to tell life in Westmoreland all the year round, with a month in Thrigsby, was more than a little dull. John used to say: "I shall use *my* money."—"How?" Sophia would ask.—"When I have made it I shall develop certain ideas, political probably. I shall leave them to my sons with enough money to help them to propagate them. I'm not going to leave my sons just money and nothing else. Look at the Allison-Greigs."—Sophia considered the Allison-Greigs, who were indeed amiable but aimless.—"Yes, John," said Sophia. "I see you are different."—"I am that," said John, "and I hold that your Keiths and your Greigs are on the wrong track altogether. After all a man owes something to the world more than to get all he can out of it. Get all you can out of it certainly, but give something back, something better."—"Yes, indeed, John."—"He owes it to himself to win honour as well as fortune. There's no monument to Angus Greig, and

there'll be no monument to Andrew Keith. I mean, a rich man must be a benefactor."—"Oh! John, you do have beautiful ideas, but cannot a poor man be a benefactor?"—"Not unless he is a genius, and I would not go so far as to call myself that."—"No, John."

His courtship was one long conversation like that, carried on over years. He did not need to propose, but slipped into the position of future son-in-law in Mr. Sykes' house and was free to go there whenever he liked. He got on very well with Mr. Sykes, who used to amuse himself with inventing railway couplings and devices connected with steam-engines for which John used to procure the iron and steel cheap. With this friendship John was able to conceal the real object of his visits so that it came as a surprise to his brothers when he announced his approaching marriage; his mother knew because Maggie knew, and had told Sophia a thing or two about John which would have incensed him had he known.—"God bless my soul," said Tom when the news was announced, "I don't see how you can afford it. No man worthy of the name would live on his wife's money. Look at the Prince-Consort."—"I don't see why he should not," interrupted Jamie, looking up from his book, "if he loves her."—"You're a romantic fool, Jamie. A man would not be master in his own home if he were under an obligation to the woman."—"Is not every man under an obligation to a woman for his birth?" asked Jamie.—"Abominable coarseness," muttered Tom who hated arguing because he was a poor hand at it.—"I am very pleased," said Margaret, "though I think you are young yet, John, and might have waited until you had a real position."—"Oh! I'll have that, mother, don't you be afraid. I've got my foot well in at Murdoch's."—"Personally," said Tom, "I made up my mind never

to marry until the three of us had been able to establish mother in a house with an income of her own. I suppose you'll be the next, Jamie."—"Indeed, no," said Jamie with a blush and a tremor for he was passing through an evil time and Selina was having her way with him. "Indeed, no. I think I shall never marry, but I hope John will be happy and not despise his bachelor brothers."—"He's more likely to envy them," growled Tom. "I should have thought Uncle Andrew was warning enough."—"Sophia," said Margaret, "is almost a member of the family,"—as though that were a guarantee against the fate of Elizabeth.—"Oh! well," said Tom, "when trade's good people marry."—"And when it's bad?" asked Jamie with a chuckle, for Tom had begun to amuse him immensely.—"When it's bad," replied Tom, "they get into trouble."—Jamie buried his head in his book. Tibby came in to lay the supper.—"John's going to be married," said Margaret.—"On Sophia?" asked Tibby.—"It *is* Sophia," said John, "but how did you know?" —"He was always staying with those Sykes," said Tibby and her eyes moved round anxiously to Jamie. "You look anxious," he said. "Do you think it means the break-up of the family?"—"Marrying," said Tibby, "is catching."—"Then Tom had better look out."

Tom snorted and took his stand by the fireplace: "I am not," he said, "an adherent of the doctrines of laissez-faire, thank God. If I were head of the family I should strongly express my disapproval of this marriage; at least until John had produced evidence of his ability to support a wife in a position worthy of the family."—"As you are not head of the family," retorted John with some heat, "you can only express a personal opinion and for that I do not care a brass farthing. Mr. Sykes is satisfied; mother is satisfied; I am satisfied."—Jamie was

roused: "I would like it better," said he, "if you showed Tom that you did not care a rap for the family."—"But I do care," said John, "and I should be as sorry to lose your approval as I would be if I were ever to lose my own of you."—"Fine words butter no parsnips," said Tom. "Are you or are you not in a position to support a wife independent of her means?"—"I am," replied John, "or I would not be getting married."—"Then," said Tom, "I should like to know how you have done it, for *I* could not have married at twenty-five. I think you should insist, Jamie, on having some evidence. *I* for one will not support his children."—"They will be Sophia's children too," said Margaret. "She will surely always have plenty of money."—"Is old Sykes making a settlement? And who are to be the trustees?"—"Oh! Let it be, Tom," said Jamie, "that's Sykes' affair."—"It is a family affair and should be on a business footing. And again, will John or will he not contribute to the fund after he is married? I had been hoping that in another two years we should be able to pay that off."—"I'll continue my contributions of course," said John, and with that Tom was appeased. He had got what he wanted.

Jamie was uneasy. John had always a way of making him feel unduly adolescent and rather absurd. It was just like John to be the first to marry; to take things into his own hands and to build up his separate life. John seemed able to assert a principle, even though on close scrutiny it should not appear as that noble Lawriean principle of his dreams. But he himself? What was he asserting? How vague and indefinite he seemed. He had, it is true, passionate hours with Selina which made him feel magnificently superior to his brothers whose souls were dry and meagre, but to them almost every day was an achievement, bringing them nearer to the

prosperous existence of which they approved. He was himself, to all appearances, as prosperous as they, but he had, as he was certain they had not, moments of doubt, moments of feeling closely confined and fierce impulses to break out and proclaim loudly the principle of his being for which in his prosperity there seemed no room.—He had done well at the bank, which at the moment of his entering it had been threatened by the Thrigsby and District which, far from despising small and unrecommended accounts, had opened branch after branch to catch the savings of humble and small people. He had drawn up a report on the doings of the Thrigsby and District, that upstart, and had urged Mr. Rigby Blair to enter into competition. Success had attended his efforts and promotion had followed them. It was understood that he would one day step into Mr. Blair's shoes. This was gratifying and his better position gave him a wide outlook for his researches into the anatomy of Thrigsby which he found both more repulsive and more fascinating. His mother was pleased with him, as she was with all her sons. Her adventure had led to triumph and a security which she imagined nothing could shake. It was precisely that security that Jamie dreaded. It depended, he knew, entirely on money, and in money the Lawrian principle could not find expression. John was much nearer to it in marrying.—Then came the teasing thought of Selina. O! there the principle could have been expressed had there been no bank, no family, no Uncle Andrew, no Thrigsby, no need to eat, drink and be fed and housed. Selina was a figure of carnival, of gay clothes and masks, of throbbing violins and merry songs, and all the rest of life was heavy and Lenten. Even John's marriage was Lenten and at once Jamie was against it. Women, he thought, had no place in

that drab world, and no shadow from it should fall upon their lives: the shadow of death and the torment of child-birth for them but not the smoked ruins of dull care. Women were to his idealism splendid beings who could look after themselves, for they seemed to him to have a mysterious sure knowledge of life. His mother, for instance, was never far out in her estimate of things and people; Selina held the key to a world of enchantment; and Tibby was, as is known, a witch. But the disturbing influence in his life, the source of his dissatisfaction, was Mrs. Bulloch with whom on Sunday afternoons he used to go to play cribbage. She loved her game of cribbage, and so did he, but most he loved the old woman's rude wit and wisdom. Though he did not know it, Selina was no more than a by-product of this enjoyment and a seasoning in it. And it was Mrs. Bulloch's wisdom in him that made him disapprove of John's project. It seemed to him cold-blooded and calculating.

However, when the time came for the wedding he and Tom got out their top-hats and Prayer Books, donned their best broadcloth frock-coats, bought their mother a new black silk, and a bonnet with white flowers in it, the first headgear she had worn for years that did not proclaim her widowhood. Mary came from Edinburgh and Tibby was only present in John's mind, for she had visited him a day or two before and stood for a long time silent and mysterious. Then she had said:—"Are you pleased to be married, John?"—"I am," said he.—"You don't look it."—He said nothing, for, like the rest, he was rather afraid of Tibby and used to the strange inquisition she used every now and then to submit them to.—"Is she a bonny girl—Sophia?" John produced a daguerreotype of his betrothed.—"Aye, she's

bonny and a tender young thing. She'll need lovering, John."—"Why would I be marrying her else, Tibby?" —"It was Andrew Keith I had in mind, John. Love's an easy word to say but a hard thing to practise."—"Oh! Ho! Are you in love, Tibby?"—"I? With my face? Love's for the pretty ones."—"I'm not pretty, Tibby." —"No. It isn't only faces that are pretty. Have a care to it, John, or I'll haunt you, ugly as I am." And John felt unpleasantly like a child being chidden by its nurse. That was Tibby's way. There was no hoaxing her, or making her take you at your own value. She could put her finger on your emotional centre so that your mind for one brief horrid moment would become a chart of your mental and spiritual condition. For a flash John felt ashamed of himself, but immediately he persuaded himself that his shame was decent humility and natural fear before the sacrament of marriage. Like many another he was persuaded that because it was he who was going to be married, therefore his marriage was particularly holy and would receive especial attention from the Deity. This idea became a conviction in Westmoreland when he saw the elaborate preparations that had been made and the formidable assembly of Keiths and Greigs and Allison-Greigs. If only Tibby had not said what she had, though exactly what she had said he could not remember! But during the service when he was nervous and wrought up Tibby was very much more real a figure to him than the little white figure by his side. In a dream he signed the register, in a dream he walked out of the church with Sophia on his arm, and in a waking nightmare he drove with her over to Keswick where they were to spend their honeymoon. He was not—alas! that it has to be recorded in a work written in English—a stranger to woman, but his wife was not

in his ordinary sense a woman and he was afraid of her. He disguised his fear. Clasping Sophia's hand, he told her that he was especially fond of kidneys for breakfast and that Murdoch's had raised his salary in consideration of his marriage. From that he returned to his ambitions, and, at last, as they reached Keswick, he told Sophia that she looked very pretty and that he was proud to call her his wife. So much tenderness she had not had from him before and she turned her face to him and they kissed. His fear of her died and he felt that he had done well.

Meanwhile at the Donald Greigs', where the guests had foregathered, Mary was delighting in Jamie. They escaped together and went for a long walk over the fells. It was March. A blustering north-west wind was blowing, gusty blizzards came every now and then, the snow lying on the cold sodden ground.—"By God," said Jamie, "I am glad to see you."—"It was a comic wedding," said Mary. "All weddings are either comic or tragic. Yours would be tragic."—"Why?"—"Because you are a tragic man. I was shocked when I saw your face at first, but I love it now. A man's face should show the life behind it. Are you happy?"—"Dod, that's a funny question. I'd never ask it of myself."—"Perhaps it is foolish. What I really meant was, I think, are you *you?*"—That beat Jamie and he did not know what she meant though he had no doubt of the affection behind her words. He said: "I hope you're getting the life you ought to have."—"I? Oh, yes. I have my friends and I work very hard."—"What friends?"—"Men mostly. I'm glad not to have left Scotland. I couldn't have found such friends in England. That has made me afraid for you."—"I have my friends too."—"Mostly women?"—"No. Why should you think that? Men: all sorts. The best of

them are slightly disreputable. Why is that, do you think?"—Said Mary: "Because they are not so self-satisfied."—"That's it!" said Jamie—"And mother?"—"She's satisfied enough. Didn't you see her treating the Allison-Greigs as though they were dirt?"—"Is Tom going to marry Agnes?"—Jamie's heart leaped on that, then turned to stone.—"Tom?" he said. Mary did not catch the incredulous gasp in his tone and went on complacently: "I saw it at once."

Tom? Tom and Agnes. The thought melted Jamie's bowels. Agnes had always been to him a figure of unearthly loveliness. Deep in his heart there had lain the hope that some day he might unearth in life some beauty that he might lay before her, and with an immense patience he had been watching and waiting for the miraculous growth in himself which should make him of a stature and a strength, if necessary, to wrest that beauty from life. All else had been insignificant; all other happenings had been superficial: he had been pregnant in soul with the idea of Agnes and nothing else he had known in life could aid him or deliver him of it. Tears blinded his eyes. The keen wind came rushing across the hills and slapped his face. His blood raced in an agony. He was torn out of his brooding, the long brooding of years upon that sweet possession of his soul, and the whole world in its violent energy called him fool. He would not have Agnes to be woman: not such a woman as Tom might know.—"O, Mary, Mary! You to deal me such a hurt!"—That was his inward cry and at once it turned to the most bitter and rending laughter. It seemed to him then that his life had begun and ended in one moment. Its one flower had been trampled underfoot in the cold sodden ground, in the snow.—Followed a melancholy sensation of understanding everything, the

delicious absurdity, the tragic unending futility of the world that has its being in the birth and death of its desires, ecstasy and ruin.—Mary said:—"I'm going to Berlin, soon, in a month or two."—"For long?"—"It might be for years."—Jamie understood her. He found comfort in that. The world may be futile but human beings have comradeship to defend themselves against its futility. He understood her. She too had her sorrow. —"I'm sorry he will not have ye, wee Mary."—She smiled awry: "It's not for want of asking," she said. "I'm clever enough for him but he would like a big woman, that would just keep him warm and settle his nerves."—"Is he a great man?"—"He's more than that," said Mary. 'He's a teacher and a seer."—Jamie laughed: "It's queer," he said, "to think of me in a bank counting money and you living with the salt of the earth."— "There's not much Napoleon about you now, Jamie."— "Deed, no. I think Napoleon must have been a boy always. They do a deal of harm those men who keep the genius of a child through the affairs and doings of a man."—"I wish you were not in a bank, Jamie. You ought to be writing."—"In Thrigsby? You don't know Thrigsby."—"Then leave it?"—"And mother? I could not do that. I'm the head of the family."—"There's Tom."—"I will *not* leave that or anything to Tom. And —change the subject, please."

He kept her walking for hours. The snow lay thick. They lost their way. He was afraid to go back, would not go until Agnes and her family would have left the Donald Greigs'.

CHAPTER XIX

AGNES OF THE LAKE

JAMES and Mary walked above ten miles over rough ground but when they returned Agnes had not gone. She had set herself to please Margaret who was on her first visit to the mansions of the clan Greig, having always refused to go before until her sons were on an equality with their rich kinsmen. She had thought that John's marriage would mark their arrival at that desired point and she was disappointed. John after all had only married the daughter of a dependent of the Greigs, and so, it seemed to her, had "done for himself" as completely as when he had crossed fingers with his Uncle Andrew. It was not the wedding a Greig young woman would have had: there were subtle and stealthy economies; there were few guests outside the family; the wedding feast was second-rate—only three kinds of wine. So Margaret was affronted and stiffened herself, finding her only comfort in the thought that she had refused the assistance of the Greigs in the time of her first difficulties. She had not for years looked so inexorable a widow, and she alarmed and distressed the Greigs who tried one after another to talk to her and to charm her. Only Agnes was persistent. Tom had proposed to her that day for the third time, and though she had refused him she was interested in him and appreciated

his force of character. She was alarmed by him and her life had always been so secure that she liked being alarmed. She was adored. It was the tradition in the family to adore Agnes. Old Angus had worshipped her when she was a child. She had been his "wee wifie," and he used in his last years to write to her every morning and visit her every afternoon. Easily and gracefully she had accepted the almost divine position accorded her by the Greigs and suffered for it in finding herself near completely inaccessible to strangers. It was difficult for her to deal with people who did not approach her with homage. But for Tom she could not have attempted to engage the stern Margaret. Tom was rough in his wooing: direct and business-like. He wanted a Greig for his wife and tried to bring down the highest flier. Agnes' refusal had at first shocked him. He had not imagined that men, successful men, were refused. When he tried again with no better luck the excitement of sport entered into the affair. He would stalk his quarry. Agnes had never been stalked before. Her usual refusal was taken by her wooers as gently as it was given. They were left so immensely and deliciously sorry for themselves as almost to thank God they had not been accepted. One or two, to be sure, said that Agnes was cold, but only as poets call the moon so in their thankfulness that there is some relief from the heat of the sun. Tom on the other hand did not think about Agnes at all, except that he wanted her and meant to have her to reach the next stage in his career. He was inclined to agree with his mother that John had lowered himself and the family, but then John always had shown Radical tendencies. Indeed Tom had begun to feel that the future depended upon him; John seemed to have no pride, while Jamie with his soft shilly-shallying and his literary fal-lals

might be an ornament but was almost certainly a dead weight. Agnes turned Lawrie would ensure the future; nothing could then impinge upon it. This lack of personal interest—though Agnes had some beauty and was from the lower and merely human point of view satisfactory—gave Tom a terrible energy, against which Agnes protected herself with aloofness and by putting on an extra layer of clothes, as though the more effectively to hide from her suitor the woman beneath them. She was almost as heavily and stiffly draped as Margaret, so that Tom hardly noticed any difference between her and his mother. She was to be his wife; that was beyond doubt. *Wife* and *mother* were respectable terms, almost awful, having nothing at all to do with womanhood. Like the word *lady* they could lift a woman out of the morass in which otherwise she would be lost, and gave her a position in society. These three words marked stages; to be a lady was to be discernible and calculable; however attached to wifehood, motherhood provided justification; a man could recognise the mother of his sons: he could let her feel that he was pleased with her; spontaneously and not in response to her charms of cajolery. How far Agnes was aware of this philosophic system which governed Tom's wooing of her it is impossible to say. She would smile most sweetly when she thought of him, but if she had any feeling she did not betray herself. There is a letter of hers written to her dearest friend to whom she says: "It is not such an honour as he thinks it is,"—but she may not have been referring to Tom.—She was certainly a lady, but was as certainly romantic, chivalrous and charitable and she liked a quick mind in a man. Tom had vigour, but he lacked agility. If only she could have roused him she would have found him more satis-

fying. She wanted to find out what his mother thought of him, but not even to serve her son would Margaret give herself away. Agnes kept her in the hall, the great ugly hall filled with the pictures and bric-a-bracs purchased by Sophia's father for Angus, and submitted her for three hours to a gentle cross-examination. Was she not proud to have three such fine sons?—"Not a sinful pride," said Margaret.—"Surely a mother may have pride without being sinful."—"As to that," replied Margaret, "I have my disappointments. It was a sad blow to me when John went out of the family. I had been wanting them all to be partners together. The Greigs did it, but John was always headstrong and impatient. His haste to be married was almost—— Er, hum."—"You are so like dear Cousin Andrew," said Agnes. "I see it in Tom too."—"I hope," said Margaret, "John has arranged a satisfactory settlement with his father-in-law, but, of course, he has said nothing about it to me."—That was another grudge of Margaret's; having made an almost runaway match with her Thomas there had been no question of settlements in her case, and since John's announcement of his betrothal, her thoughts had been running on the subject. Her case, she thought, was singular; she could carry off a marriage without settlements, but it was not a thing to have repeated in a younger and weaker generation.—"And when," she said, "are we to have the pleasure of hearing of *your* wedding, my dear?"—"The Greigs," answered Agnes, "do not marry easily."—"Some young London gentleman, I suppose," said Margaret, for the Greigs spent two months of the year in London. "I find it so hard," sighed Agnes, "to forget my grandfather. All other men—— He had thoughts, you see, and such deep feelings."—"Scotch," said Margaret. "We have feelings, but they are sacred.

We do not talk of them."—So their conversation ran on, neither being able to pin the other down, until they had chafed each other into an irritation, and Margaret decided in her own mind that Agnes was a prig and purse-proud, and Agnes had concluded that her dear cousin was stupid and arrogant.

Tom joined them presently and was overjoyed to see his mother and his future bride so much interested in each other that nothing could separate them. He said as much. He drew himself up in an Andrewish attitude by the fireplace under the snarling head of an otter which had been killed in the back at the bottom of the garden. He hum'd and ha'd and picked his words saying: "I hope I don't intrude, but it is such a pleasure to me to see you two together. I can almost imagine we were at home in Murray Street, my mother sitting by the fire, and you, Agnes, come to visit us, as I hope you will, one day." —"Agnes smiled: "I might," she said. "I would like to. I often feel it is a shame that we should have left Thrigsby which, after all, keeps us alive."—"That's what I say," said Tom. "If you make money out of a place you owe something to it. Look at Uncle Andrew. Never budged from Clibran Hall, though the district is fast going down-hill and there will soon be factories all round his garden. Yes, Agnes, you must come back to the workers. We are no longer feudal. We do not live by service. We are free Britons. Every man for himself is the law now."—"Tom," said his mother, "don't make a fool of yourself. That is not the law and nothing like it. The Ten Commandments are the law." Tom went white with rage. He had been pleased with himself. Not knowing the irritation from which Margaret was suffering, she seemed to him an unaccountable and insolent old woman.—"It is at any rate the law in business,"

he smiled. He looked very like the otter and Agnes began to be afraid of him, and was surprised to find herself saying: "Of course, commerce has made a difference."—"That," said Tom, "is what I have never been able to make my mother understand." Margaret was not going to lose her victory and she added as she rose with a swish of her skirts:—"It does not take you, Tom, to teach me how many beans make five, and success in business does not absolve a man from his duty to his parents." Tom was very angry. He was cutting a poor figure in front of Agnes, with whom he had thought his mother would help him. Talk of saving the family! She was as dense as Jamie and as incapable of seeing which side of her bread was buttered. He remembered with a cold shiver his mother's trick of talking of them as though they were still children. What might she not have told Agnes? How he was very proud of his long aristocratic feet and kept his toe-nails very carefully, perhaps! She was quite capable of it.—"Aren't you going to lie down before supper, mother? You must be tired."—"I am not tired, and I cannot sleep in a strange bed."—"Would you like me to read to you?" asked Agnes, relieved at the passing of the strain. "She hates being read to," jerked Tom.—"I think," said Margaret, "I prefer my own company." And she sailed away to Mrs. Donald's boudoir which had been placed at her disposal.

Tom was left speechless. How to explain? How to recover the lost ground? He did not know how much ground he had lost. He swung his right leg and stroked his chin, but not a word could he say. Agnes smiled, smoothed out her skirts and waited. Tom had always been so confident; his present furious anxiety was a welcome change. At last to help him out she said: "She

is such a character, such a fine character."—Tom muttered: "She is simply incomprehensible. I have been a good son to her, and she behaved like that, almost rudely, to you."—"Perhaps," replied Agnes, "perhaps she is shy, or perhaps she is feeling the loss of your brother."—"She is disappointed, I know. It is not the marriage any of us would have chosen for him."—"But Sophia is the dearest child."—"We Lawries," cried Tom, "are ambitious. We aim always at the highest."—"Perhaps," said Agnes, "your brother could see no higher."—"Ah!" said Tom gallantly, "but I do. I see myself—I see myself—er——" He caught Agnes' eye and became tongue-tied again. "I see myself——"—"Yes?" asked she sweetly. —"That's enough," he snarled, his fury returning. "I will put up with things from my mother that I will not stand from you. I asked you this morning if you would marry me. You said 'No.' I ask you now. Will you marry me, and your answer shall be——"

He was not allowed to finish for Mary entered the room and sat by Agnes taking her hand in hers. She looked up at her brother and said: "Go on, Tom."—Agnes clutched Mary's hand tight and squeezed it. She had nearly been frightened into giving Tom the answer he desired.—"Go on, Tom. Were you making a speech?" —"I was saying," said he, "that the Lawries are ambitious."—"They are always convinced that they are in the right."—"Oh! dear," said Agnes, "so are the Greigs." —"We generally *are* right," observed Tom, "but our women-folk will never listen to us."—"Perhaps," said Mary, "they like to be wrong for a change."—"You may laugh," replied Tom. "You may regard me as a fool, if you like, but I know what I am doing and I mean to do it."

He was fascinated by the sight of Agnes' white hand

in Mary's. It looked as though they would never be separated. He was going back in the morning. He might not have another opportunity. He decided to lie.—"Mother was asking for you, Mary."—"Was she? I expect she has found Maggie by now."—"Maggie is out dining with Mrs. Donald."—"Jamie came in with me. He has gone to look for her."—"I was having a most interesting conversation with Agnes."—He saw Agnes press Mary's hand and draw it towards her. Those women! These abominable women! Was a man nothing but a joke to them? Had they no feeling? No sense of proportion? Could they not see that a man's schemes for his future were of vital importance? Little plain Mary made Agnes look superb and beautiful. Tom drew himself up to his full height and felt that he was a man of whom she was worthy. He had, he believed, a strong face, but these women seemed able to baffle strength. Let them wait. They should see. Once married to him, Agnes should feel his strength. Mary said: "I shall not see Agnes again for years. You are never so far away. Was he being so very interesting, Agnes?"—"I was not," said Tom. "I keep my brains for my business. Are you staying to supper, Agnes?"—"No. I promised I would be at home."—"Then perhaps I may walk with you."—"If Mary will come too."—"I have walked so far," said Mary, "but I will ask Jamie."—"Jamie!" cried Tom.—"I admire your brother so much," murmured Agnes. And at that moment Jamie came in to say that Margaret was asking for Tom.—"She seems to be unhappy about you. I don't know what you have been doing."—Tom took out his watch, put it back again, twiddled the chain, pulled down his waistcoat, swung his right leg, stroked his chin.—"I was blunt with her," he said at length.—"And she's been blunt with me, so you'd

better go and be kind to her," said Jamie, "or the Greigs will think us the most quarrelsome family in the world." He stole a shy glance at Agnes and she was very beautiful to him.—"I shall not be long," said Tom and with absurd conscious dignity he strode from the room. Mary pounced on her opportunity and bade Jamie take Agnes home. She bundled them out of the house and Jamie walked miserably by the side of the woman he loved best in the world two paces away from her. He had a stick in his hand and he kept changing it from one arm to the other, carrying it across the small of his back, with his arms crooked round it, or across his shoulder, and every now and then he dropped it. At last, very timidly, he managed to say: "My sister, Mary, likes you very much."—"I like Mary, too. I think she is a dear."—"She has more brains than the rest of us put together."—"My grandfather used to say: 'Character, passionate character is what counts.' "—"He must have been a grand man."—"He was."—"Hubert talks about him." Within himself Jamie said: "I don't want to talk about Hubert. I don't want to talk at all. O! Agnes, Agnes, it is an agony to be with you."—But Agnes was happy with Hubert for a subject. He was so entirely different from all she disliked in the Greigs. Jamie said at length: "It must be grand to live among all this loveliness."—"But I feel sometimes," said Agnes, "that I have not earned it, that I have not seen ugliness enough to be able to love its beauty."—"God forbid," said Jamie, "that you should ever see an ugly thing or suffer any hurt."—"Sometimes," answered Agnes, "I long to suffer. It is almost suffering in itself."—She had begun to feel suddenly happy with this handsome and romantic cousin of hers. He was difficult and shy. If she could only make him open out to her, he might a little satisfy

her longing. She felt almost pity for him, though she had no reason to think he needed it. Mary had described him as wonderful. They walked on through a long silence which he broke at last with a laugh: "Cousin Agnes," he said, "I take you from one comfortable house to another. Would it surprise you if I told you that from the bottom of my heart I hate comfortable houses?"—"No," she said, "not altogether. I would not be surprised at anything you told me."—"And yet you must have everything of the best, and I would not have you have less. What I hate about you I cannot hate in you." Agnes was pained. She did not know why. She said: "But you yourself will one day be rich and important."—"I! Never. I have no thought in my head that will fit into such houses as these, and indeed I know of no place where my thoughts will fit." He was quite cheerful about it, taking refuge from the fierce emotions with which he was beset in intellectual probing, in a new irony which he had lately discovered in his mind.—"I am glad you have told me so much," said she. "I hope one day you will tell me more."—"Why! I have told you nothing. But I'd give my ears to see you in love." Agnes' thoughts flew guiltily to Tom. He added: "Then I could tell you something."—"What?"—"My whole abominable soul." He felt that he had alarmed her. He was astonished to find himself talking so to her. Never had he been so free with anyone. He was so much in love with her that he could not but be disinterested. He could not assert any claim to her. If she could not feel what he felt for her, so much the worse for him. Words would spoil it, drag it down, make what he had to give unworthy of the giving. Complications on complications delightful to his irony. He was sorry for her, vastly sorry for her, as he often was for his mother, because

she was a woman and emotionally confined. But in his heart there was an agony because he could not think of her apart from his brother. His shyness was his master. It was one thing to sound her for interest in himself; another to follow up that interest when discovered. Tom and she! The combination was so fantastic as to be only too probable. Life had been made so easy and smooth for her: she would always look for the easy and the obvious. O well! There would be no subtility about Tom, while she set himself winding through the most intricate complications in the effort to arrive at the burning emotion she roused in him. He would never do it. She would never help him. It was horrible how clearly he saw all that. She would have her comfortable home, the comfortable adorations with which she was surrounded and the tenderness, the passion in her would never be roused. He was, he saw, just interesting to her. It was grimly comical to be walking through the rough March evening with her, the splendid captive woman, untouched, unmoved, child-like. Thèse childish English! Would life always be a pretty game to them? Would they never suffer, never be crushed into humility; would they always shut themselves in against life and never go out upon adventure, never seek adventures within themselves? Agnes seemed to Jamie then to be the true figure of that England which he had set out to conquer, so beautiful, so unapproachable, so isolated. And her isolation was not that of thought or feeling but that of a sweet unfailing discretion. What she was not seemed to him so much more moving than what she was. With a man she would be more submissive than responsive. Jamie could appreciate the irony of this love of his which had brought him none of love's blindness. He said:—"The Lawries won't be Englished yet awhile."

And she answered: "That sounds like a warning. Is it?"—"You can take it so, if you've a mind to. We've fared hard, and everything we have in our lives must be hard or we will have none of it."—"Even love?" asked Agnes timidly.—"It would be a rare woman would find and keep the tenderness in a Lawrie," said he, and she felt that she was getting out of her depth and jerked back to her placid conventional mode of thinking.—"You are a strange man, Cousin Jamie," she said.—"Not so strange," said he, "if you should come to know me, but that is none too easy, with me or any man."

Her father's house was nearer the lake, and the path they had taken led by its shores, where the water lapped upon the pebbles and sucked among the reeds. There was a wild sky, with torn hurrying clouds and behind the fells the light of a little new-risen moon. They stood and gazed over the water: "You'd never know," he said, "the feeling that English is a foreign language to you and that you have no true speech of your own."—"No-o," said Agnes, mystified.—"Dod," he said, "what a fool I am, and a haverer. I've been talking to you as I might to wee Mary and what I've wished to say I could not say."—"I wish you had tried," said Agnes feeling dissatisfied with herself and anxious to do better.—"Then," said Jamie, "I wish you were a wild thing. I wish you could be a kind of pixie dwelling in the lake and that I could be a wizard to call you forth and make you human."—"Oh! yes," said Agnes, half comprehending and trembling upon the threshold of his mood.—"Love is like that to me," he added, "wizardry."—"Wizardry," echoed Agnes and her eyes began to see the familiar scene as they had never seen it before, as a thing composed, designed, vibrant, calling to her and waking a call in her heart. It fluttered her heart, and she was in

the most delicious pain. More and more beautiful to her was the lake under the moving sky. Jamie as yet had no share in it. He was a dark figure standing by the lake, mysterious and wizard-like, almost intolerably inhuman. The pain grew in poor Agnes. She was inarticulate and helpless. She turned to him for pity, for comfort, and terribly she was almost aware of him as a man. She wanted to cry out to him but could make no sound. She was afraid. Behind them footsteps sounded, and another coarser fear came to her aid.—"Tom!" she cried, though she could not possibly have seen him in the darkness under the trees. Jamie gave a noise that was between a snarl and a chuckle, for he had truly been under a spell and it was hateful to him to be brought out of it—and by Tom. Tom and Agnes!—"Where's your wizardry now?" he said to himself.—"Agnes!" called Tom. "You will catch your death of cold."—"Yes, Tom," said she, shivering.—"You must be mad, Jamie, to keep her out on a night like this."—Jamie made no reply. Tom took Agnes by the arm and walked her briskly away. "Tom's the boy," said Jamie, "to play with diamonds as though they were marbles, and may the Lord have mercy on me. O dear, O dear, if I could but have the rages that were on me when I was a boy. When life becomes a joke it is hardly bearable."

He pursued this line of thought with Mary in her room that night and she promised to send him some books which she hoped would help him, also translations of some of Goethe's poems. "It is a shame," she said. "I am having the life you ought to have had."—"I think not," said Jamie. "I'd be using my fists on your philosophers before I'd been with them a week. Instead of that I use my brains on dear, good, foolish living men and that's nigh as stupid."—"Oh! Jamie," cried Mary, sitting

up in her bed and looking like a lively mischievous little girl, "if only I could be your wife, *I'd* make something of you."—"What would you make of me, wee Mary?" —"The dearest, oddest, kindest man in all the world," said she.—"You're a funny little sparrow," he said, stooping over her and kissing her, "but the English don't want dear, kind men any more. Poor Shelley's dead and they have forgotten Toby Shandy."—"O! O! O!" cried Mary, "I wouldn't waste you on the dirty English. I'd have all Edinburgh running after you like the children after the Pied Piper of Hamelin."—"Then," replied Jamie, "you don't know me, for, if they did, then I'd turn and spit in their faces. I hate a crowd."

CHAPTER XX

HUBERT AS DEVIL'S ADVOCATE

THE return to Thrigsby was melancholy. John's absence made a difference in the household, for he was the most loquacious member of the family and the rest had to loosen their tongues whether they liked it or not. The result was a nightly sparring between Jamie and Tom. Their hostilities made Margaret acutely unhappy and she decided to counter them with a change. She had been very busy preparing John's house in a suburb on the other side of Thrigsby, and she chose a new house in the Harporley Road, which, while it was twice as big as the Murray Street house, would only cost half as much again in rent. She flattered Jamie's literary propensities by telling him that he could have one of the upstairs rooms for himself, and Tom's self-importance by according him the private use of the dining-room out of meal-times. They moved and the brothers avoided each other. Tibby was given a servant to help her, and the existence of the family was to outward appearances prosperous, peaceful and monotonous. At half-past eight the front door opened and Tom would appear in his sober suit of black and walk off down the road: at a quarter to nine James would appear, almost equally sober in garb with a coloured tie and waistcoat and walk off up the road. On Saturday nights John and his wife would come to supper.

There was a social advance and they were no longer dependent on the church for their status. Perhaps because of this, perhaps because they had other interests, they went to church less regularly.

An effort was made and Margaret was able to repudiate her pension and also to pay back all the money she had from the Scottish fund for the widows of ministers. Jamie was made to feel that Tom was responsible for nine-tenths of this triumph of domestic economy and, in so doing, had postponed almost indefinitely any intention he might have had in marrying. Jamie was so annoyed that he said: "Is it worth it?"—"Worth it?" cried Tom. "Worth it, to have our mother holding her head up once more?"—"She could hardly hold it higher," retorted Jamie, "but since you have paid, you are entitled to your satisfaction."—"I should like to know," said Tom, "what you do with your money."—"Exactly what I should like to know myself."—"You're a fine banker." —"Perhaps it is being careful with other folk's money makes me careless of my own."

As a matter of fact Jamie knew perfectly well what became of his money. Miss Selina, Mrs. Bulloch, Henry Acomb and Mr. Wilcox all had their share in it, and, had it not been for him, Tibby would have gone without clothes from one year's end to the other, for she still had only enough in wages to keep herself in print frocks for the house.

From that visit to the Greigs Jamie returned in a torment of which he could make nothing. He laughed at himself over that strange idealisation of Agnes which made his feeling for her so impersonal, but laughter could not change it and he did not wish to change it. It had flicked him out of life, given him a power in himself that was quite useless in any other walk of his exist-

ence. There was simply nothing to be done with it. There was no way of getting rid of it.—"Oh! well," he said, "that settles it." Yet he knew not what it was that was "settled." He did, however, become aware that he was altered, that he now regarded everything and everybody in a cool, detached, humorous fashion. It was sometimes extremely painful, but more often vastly amusing. He was emotionally so clear and sure, and removed from any temptation to waste emotion on things and people that were unworthy of it. Tom had become almost a figure of farce. He would get on: nothing would stop him getting on; but he would get nowhere. Jamie's own occupation had become rather ludicrous to him. It was practical, ingenious, interesting, serviceable, but it was fatuous to pretend that it was anything more. A man should work to live; men who lived in order to work were tiresome, and must be, he thought, in the long run mischievous. There was no doubt that Thrigsby worked, but did Thrigsby live? What did it make of birth and death, of the life of the mind, of the desire of the heart? Was Thrigsby justified by the rapidly growing markets for its cotton fabrics in all parts of the world?—As these questions were not very amusing but, rather, tormenting, he did not trouble about answering them, but, to shelve them, turned more and more to things theatrical, collecting his articles in *The Critic* into a book and pleasing himself with the idea that he was becoming something of an authorty. The leading actors who came down from London wished to make his acquaintance and he took this as tribute to his powers rather than to his position. He had become, secretly, Selina's lover. She had played with him, until, opportunity presenting itself, they had embarked light-heartedly upon that enterprise which promises more satisfaction than, as a rule, it gives. Se-

lina's previous experience had been so unhappy that she was agreeably surprised, while Jamie with his new intuition was able to measure the relationship exactly and to expect from it no more than was forthcoming. They were amazingly happy. Selina had no wish but it was gratified; Jamie had no dark mood but she could tease and tickle him out of it. What nonsense to call the theatre an outpost of damnation! At any rate, if damnation be one half so pleasant, then let the prigs have heaven. They deserve it. So thought and so said Jamie when he was well embarked upon this adventure. It had rid him of one of the most deep-seated notions of his upbringing that a passion to be worthy of the name must be hopeless, and because he had a great respect for Selina he was unable to think of her as not respectable. It was his delight on a Sunday night to drive Selina out in a dog-cart, with Mrs. Bulloch up behind, to Hubert's farm at Chapel, half-way up a craggy hill, in country that, because it contained no Greigish mansions, seemed almost more remote than Westmoreland. This country was even more beautiful because it had had no poets to sing its praises and turn certain corners into shows. Jamie liked to think that every man in it was his own poet, but this idea would not let him off thinking that every man in Thrigsby also was his own poet with the song of his life swelling up beneath its freakish appearances. And so happy was he with Selina that he did not reject such thoughts, but told himself that the sound of a man's heart was as absurdly out of place in Thrigsby as Selina was in the country, as absurdly out of place and as delicious. The country meant nothing to her. She would not walk a yard. But she loved the luxury of Hubert's house and its rich taste and comfort.—"O! O! O!" she cried, "the darling little bed! I never knew there

were such houses. O! When I'm a great actress I shall have ten houses like this. You shall live in one, Quint, and Ma Bulloch shall live in another, and Henry in another—and when my Papa is dead I shall have the nicest of all for my mother."—"If the girls take to keeping separate establishments I don't know *what* the world will come to," said Mrs. Bulloch. "And if all this magnificence is going to turn your head, my dear, I'll be no chaperon."—The old woman knew perfectly well what was going on and was very pleased, but she pretended to know nothing and had either of them betrayed the matter in her presence she would have refused any more to be a party to it.—"Times," she said, "are not what they were in my young day, and a girl cannot be too careful. But when a horse has got a blind eye, you know which side to go of it. There's all the difference between making merry and making free."—"What shall we do," asked Jamie, "when Selina goes to London?"—"When Selina goes to London," replied Mrs. Bulloch, "I shall go too, if it is only to be her dresser. They don't write parts for me nowadays since the theatre got so finicking. Broad I may be in my speech and my methods but old women are old women and they can't be treated as if they were innocents. My own children are grown-up and ungrateful and Selina is like a daughter to me, couldn't be more so if I'd washed her precious body and told her everything she ought to know."—"O! be quiet, Ma," said Selina, "Quint wants to read my part to me."—That was their fiction, that Jamie took her down into the country to go over her new parts with her, and Mrs. Bulloch acquiesced in it delightfully with roguish compliments on the quietness with which they learned the words.—"Nothing like whispering," she

would say, "till you've got it pat."—And on the word *pat* she would slap the back of her fat left hand.

They had a grand Christmas party to which Henry Acomb was bidden and Hubert invited himself. Hubert was delighted with the *affaire* Selina and its effect on his young relation, who had grown in grace through it and was beginning to appreciate the pleasure of being charming for its own sake. Hubert had been afraid that Jamie would succumb to the besetting sin of the Keiths and the Greigs—earnestness. There had been signs of his taking the theatre much too seriously, and, when the first enthusiasm had worn off, his writing had become rather heavy, and Bigge, that astute journalist, had made complaints which however had not been brought to Jamie's ears. Hubert had heard of the adoration of Agnes and had been alarmed, for he knew the appalling effect of the Greig women upon their lovers. He admired and loved Agnes himself, but used to say that she needed five years of marriage with a perfect brute.—It was one of his crotchets that Englishwomen need licking into shape by unhappiness. It was thus that he accounted whimsically for his own romantic disaster. "While Englishwomen are what they are," he used to say, "Englishmen will always prefer adultery to marriage." As he was a gentleman of wide experience, he probably knew what he was talking about.—When therefore Jamie came and asked if he might have the loan of his farm and with many blushes confessed the use to which he meant to put it, Hubert was delighted but disguised his feelings. And later, when Jamie could no longer contain the satisfaction with which he was bursting and spent hours in talking about it, Hubert said: "For heaven's sake don't talk as though you had discovered a new religion."—"I almost feel as if I had," said Jamie.—

"Nonsense. She would be bored with you in a week if you were taking her as seriously as all that. She likes your gaiety because she never believed you could be gay and she has no desire ever to be anything else."—"Oh! but she has her feelings too."—"Of course she has, and she feels quite rightly that they are there to keep her in zest for life."—"I cannot bear to have her sad for a moment."—"She won't be if you let her feel that she makes you forget everything else."

This was one of Jamie's difficulties. Selina made him realise everything else the more acutely. She was by this time completely absorbed by the theatre and all the world outside was but her audience. She loved in terms of the theatre, that is to say, discreetly and artistically as though there were no to-morrow, and the thing must be done perfectly for to-day. Her acting was much improved, for she went through all her parts graciously, shedding her love upon her audience, and archly, as though she were letting them into some delightful secret. And she preserved that manner when she stepped off the stage into her life with her lover. He knew perfectly that there was no secret which she could disclose to him: he had the whole available woman: but it was pleasant to enter into the comedy with her.—"We *are* going to be wonderful, aren't we, Quint?" she would say.—"We?" he would answer. "I have my doubts of myself, but you'll be just as happy fluttering over another field, a lovely field gay with cornflowers and poppies."—"But you must come too."—"O! I'll come and peep over the hedge at you."—Selina clapped her hands. "And write nice things about me?"—"I shall be a dull old gentleman then, thinking of making my will and spiting my relations after my death."—"I sometimes wish you were in the profession. I'm sure

you could act, Quint."—"I'm too old now and my mother would die of grief. It would be worse than my death to her."—"As it was to my poor dear poker of a father." Only the thought of her father could depress Selina and it always made her painfully silent.

For the Christmas party Jamie drove down as usual with Selina and Mrs. Bulloch, while Hubert followed with Henry Acomb and Currie Bigge, in a waggonette containing a turkey, two geese, a plum pudding, two dozen mince-pies, a ham, a round of beef, two jars of preserved ginger, a box of dried plums, four boxes of sweetmeats, three packets of Thrigsby cakes, a pork pie from Cheshire's in Market Street, a pot of *paté de foie gras,* a can of caviare, a barrel of beer, a dozen of Chateau Lafitte, a dozen of port, half-a-dozen bottles of rum, every kind of "Christmas cheer" as he called them, which he insisted should all be consumed in the two days set apart for the feast. He insisted that all his guests should dress up for dinner even if it were only with a towel for a turban. Selina wore a suit of Hubert's; Mrs. Bulloch appeared as a cook: Hubert donned Turkish trousers; Currie Bigge was disguised as a newspaper, while Jamie wore a wreath of bay leaves and was announced as Petronius. Only Henry Acomb refused to disguise himself.—"For this night only," he said, "I will be a member of the public."—"Ha!" cried Mrs. Bulloch, "you couldn't be that if you tried." —"He shall," said Hubert, "for in the evening we will act a play to him."

Dinner was very merry. Between the beef and the turkey Bigge began to sing and when he heard that the turkey was to be followed by a goose he insisted on making a speech in its honour. He demonstrated that it had died for its country and had attained immortal

life, for Mrs. Bulloch would eat of it and Quintus would make a poem in her honour, and in that poem the goose would go down to posterity. There was loud applause and Hubert clattered with his knife on his plate and called on Jamie to produce his poem before he carved the goose. Jamie stood up and with a melancholy eye fixed Mrs. Bulloch, who went off into shrieks of laughter. By the time she had finished he had his poem ready:—

"See how our goose becomes a swan,
Its folly with its life is gone.
It lived to die and dies to live,
With all the grace our B. can give,
On all she is and has and knows,
She sheds her grace where'er she goes.
Becoming B. the goose finds grace
To scatter it upon this place.
To B. and all here's good digestion,
The boon of boons beyond all question."

"Not so bad," said Hubert, "but you couldn't quite bring in the swan."—Selina was annoyed by this criticism and said: "Ma Bulloch's the swan, ain't she, Quint?"—And Ma Bulloch said dreamily, sleepily, and happily:—"I had a white bosom when I was young."—Hubert lay back in his chair and roared with laughter. He was delighted with his party.—"Many's the compliment I've had," said Mrs. Bulloch in her ecstasy, "but gentlemen were more free in my young days."—"Would you like a poem to your bosom, Mrs. Bulloch?" asked Hubert. She beamed on him and replied: "It wouldn't be the first, Mr. Greig."

Everybody had to make a speech before the plum

pudding came in. Hubert said: "Ladies and gentlemen, we are living in a Great Age and on an occasion like this we ought not to forget it. We are citizens of an Empire built up not by the brutal methods of war, but by the arts of peace. We have every reason to be proud of ourselves."—("Hear! Hear!" cried Bigge.) —"Mr. Bigge says 'Hear! Hear!' I must inform Mr. Bigge that I was speaking ironically. Proud of ourselves! Outside there is snow upon the ground and it is bitter cold. We have escaped from a great rich city where four-fifths of the people live and die in poverty, where thousands of families have no Christmas dinner. Pride! I say our pride is a sin while in all the land there is one child who is allowed to go to bed empty on this or any other day. Pride! We come from a great rich city where not only is there no food for the bodies of thousands of citizens, but there is no food for the mind. The noble art which you represent is allowed to languish. It is left to the enterprise of poor discouraged men. Pride! We make a fancy show and a great noise to cover up the emptiness of our lives. Therefore let us eat, drink and be merry, for to-morrow we return to a living death."—He sat down in a bewildered silence. Trembling with emotion Henry Acomb rose to his feet.—"By my living soul, sir," he said, "these are noble words. What kind of city is that which has no living breath of art in it? You have touched me, sir, in my deepest sufferings. My days are spent in filth and dirt, sir, but I have my dreams. I shall live to see the day when the poor player will be honoured like any other artist, like any other worker. I myself, sir, shall live to lay my art on the steps of the throne, and let that damned German, the Prince Consort, tread on it if he dare."—Jamie began to feel

uncomfortable. Poor Acomb was saying more than he knew, laying bare his inmost and dearest thoughts. He stole a glance at Hubert, who was enjoying it. He ought not to enjoy it: not fair to Acomb, who was becoming lyrical:—"O! they shall see the beauty that I shall put upon the stage. No picture ever painted shall approach the visions I shall create. Superb men and noble women shall live in poems. The true world of Shakespeare shall be seen to shame the mean and vulgar world where thoughts and loves are excrement. Laughter and tears shall be given them and out of laughter and tears will grow—shall grow—shall grow——" He lost his thread, turned very white and sat down. Not another word did he utter; nor could he be induced to touch another morsel of food or another drop of liquor. He seemed to be hardly conscious of the rest of the company.—"What a shame!" whispered Jamie to Hubert, who replied: "Do him good. The poor wretch has all that bottled up in him. It is amazing to me that that he does not take to drink."—"Well," said Mrs. Bulloch, rising from the table, "what I say every Christmas is, 'Better belly burst than good meat lost'."—Currie Bigge waved his glass in the air and said: "And so say all of us." He clapped Acomb on the back and shouted, "Cheer up, old buffalo." Acomb sprang to his feet, in the agony of being shaken out of his musing, which had come very near to collapse.—"I'll be revenged on the whole pack of you."—"Malvolio! Malvolio!" cried Selina. "Isn't he Malvolio! Come, we must act a play: you and me, Quint, and Ma Bulloch and Currie. That leaves Henry and Hubert for audience."

The party adjourned to the parlour, where in the wildest spirits they acted in burlesque an impromptu

drama in which Selina was the injured heroine, Jamie her base betrayer, Mrs. Bulloch her sorrowing mother, and Currie Bigge her virtuous brother who gave up all to save her and restore her good name. Acomb glared and glowered at them. Burlesque was beyond him: their fun seemed to him to be a profanation of the art which he identified with himself. Indeed their performance was not without offence and Hubert relished the almost immodest exposure of the real relationship of Jamie and Selina, of Currie's knowledge and coarse approval of it, and of Mrs. Bulloch's sentimental delight in it. They could not keep within their fable and in the scenes between Jamie and Selina it was clear to Hubert that she was the seducer, and was suffering from the timorous dissatisfaction which attends upon success in that activity. Jamie, though guilty in fact, was innocent in spirit. With him it had never been a matter of calculation. Of the two he was in the strong position and Selina plainly resented this. Only Mrs. Bulloch thoroughly enjoyed the play. The rest were glad when it came to an end. There were moments of tension to obtain relief from which Hubert invited Acomb to recite, and the actor, delighted to be at last the dominant figure, held them spellbound with Eugene Aram. He was tremendous. Horror and cold fascination as he brooded over the dark secret worked in him, fastened upon his brain, chilled it, brought him almost to madness from which, on the appearance of the runners, he sank into a relieved apathy.—"He is amazing," said Jamie, "that's true drama: real creation; human experience contained and directed upon the imagination so that it can be apprehended and understood. He must have hated our trifling with it."—But here again the effect of the play-acting had not disappeared: Acomb

also was forced into self-revelation. As he ended, he shook off Aram, sloughed him, and turned to Selina. He cared for no one else in the room. He was tortured by his love for her and accepted the imprisonment of her indifference even as Aram had yielded to the runners.—"Very nice, Henry. You must do that at Ma's benefit," said Selina.—"The little fool," thought Hubert, "the little fool, to play about with Jamie. There's a fire there would carry her higher than she can dream." He turned to watch Jamie who was arguing with Mrs. Bulloch. Had he seen that little drama of Acomb's desperate surrender? If he had seen he was covering up his feelings very well. And yet Hubert was sure that he was acting. How strange these play-house people were. There was never any knowing when they were themselves: or were they most themselves when they were not themselves? Hubert went off into a reverie amusing himself with the problem which became rather like one of those trick conundrums in which words are so placed as to be more baffling the more they are considered. Acomb had now dropped into the sofa by Selina's side, and she was giving herself the pleasure of exciting him. He became more and more gloomy and depressed and sat with folded arms and pursed lips glaring at Jamie with the blackest hatred. Jamie turned, and feeling the intense emotion in Acomb was baffled by it and smiled to disguise his discomfort. Acomb rose to his feet, and it was as though another play had begun. He moved towards Jamie, who rose to his feet and drew himself up to his full height. He was nearly a head taller than his sudden adversary and in natural dignity had the advantage, but the other had it in passion. It looked as though there were going to be a contest.—"This must

stop," thought Hubert, "this must stop." But he could not say a word. The two men faced each other: Jamie smiling, Acomb very white. Mrs. Bulloch gave a little giggle and said:—"I do hope we shall all get to our proper beds to-night. There's many a mix-up caused by a good dinner."—Her voice acted strangely on Acomb. He shook and trembled and said in a queer strangled voice: "I have the greatest respect for Quintus Flumen. Upon James Lawrie I wipe my boots."—"Good gracious!" cried Mrs. Bulloch, suddenly alive to the situation, "they're going to fight," and she leaned forward, caught Jamie by the coat-tails and pulled him back into his chair. Currie Bigge gave a roar of laughter, and then at once all were silent, for the door had opened and Tom stood there, very grim and disapproving. In his deep sardonic voice he said: "James!"—Jamie turned, startled.—"Tom!" he cried. "What the devil are *you* doing here?"—"Your place is at home," said Tom. He ignored the rest of the company and stood deliberately with his back to Hubert.—"Why?" asked Jamie.—"Uncle Andrew is dying, and my mother needs you."—"Andrew!" said Hubert, his voice expressing joy and relief. Tom turned on him and said: "You have done harm enough in my family."—"He was dead thirty years ago," said Hubert. Turning to Jamie, he added: "I think you must go, Jamie. When you get home will you read Shelley's preface to *Alastor;* or, stay, I will give you my copy to read on your way home."—To Jamie Selina, Mrs. Bulloch and Acomb had disappeared. He followed Tom out. Hubert hurried after them and offered them the use of the waggonette.—"I walked here, through the snow," replied Tom. "We'll walk back."

CHAPTER XXI

ANDREW'S WILL

THROUGH the snow trudged the two tall brothers, Jamie now nearly as grim as Tom. After a long silence Jamie said: "How did you know where to find me?"—"Thrigsby," answered Tom, "is full of tongues, as I should have thought you would have realised by now."—"So they talk about me?"—"As about everyone, but other men are proud and do not give them facts to go upon."—"Has the talk reached mother?" asked Jamie.—"It has."—"And Andrew?"—"I never heard him speak of it."—"How long has he been ill?"—"Last night. It is the second stroke. The first was hushed up. It was the night of the riot."—"I see."—"He has never been the same man since his wife left him."—"I've heard that before," said Jamie. "He was never frankly the man he was until she did."—"He was a fine man."—"He was a damned hypocrite."—"Speak well of the dying," said Tom.—"It would be better if we did not speak at all."—"I should have thought you would be moved to regret by the shadow of death upon your debaucheries." —"Have you no vices yourself, Tom? But it depends on what you call vice."—"This is no time for sophistries. Your mother's brother is dying. He is yielding up his immortal soul to God."

Their conversation was kept up with difficulty for the

snow fell ever more heavily. It was inches deep upon the ground and here and there had drifted before the wild wind. Soon they trudged along in silence again for they had taken the short cut across a high hill, the top of which was moorland. Jamie felt strangely that his situation was not altered: that he was faced with hostility, the same hostility, represented now not by Acomb but by his brother. He discovered then that among men he nearly always felt isolated. Their interests were not his: their ways of living were strange, dark and unintelligible to him. With women he was happier, but that might be only because theirs was the physical interest. He was filled with a rage of disgust at himself, and admitted that he had betrayed his family, exposed them to suspicion, perhaps to ridicule. For a moment, in the snowstorm, responding spiritually to the physical impotence forced upon him by the cruel wind, he thought that Tom was a better man than himself. Out of the corner of his eye he watched him stubbornly, obstinately, almost mechanically plodding on against the wind. "No sense of impotence there," he thought, and then in the flash of insight which he had learned from Hubert he capped the thought: "Dod, no, of course not. Impotence is a habit with him and he never suspects it in himself." His comic sense returned then and he began to find the wind exhilarating, to feel his chest expanding to it, his limbs glowing in vigour, and from the bottom of his heart he thanked God that he was not as other men are. His was a gleeful and innocent Pharisaism and he had humour enough to imagine that Tom was thinking, as indeed he was: "Thank God I am not as my brother, James."

It had been extremely painful to Tom to come down to Hubert's farm and discover his brother in all his shame.

It robbed him of the power to regard it as a hidden wickedness, rather dreadfully delicious to contemplate. His distress worked in him as he walked, and his moral indignation grew into a personal animosity against James for having deprived him of one of his pleasures. However, he avoided the danger of that condition by letting it congeal into contempt, and, even as Jamie was filled with a lusty defiance of the storm, Tom despised him.—"I'm the head of this family," he thought. "From now on I'm the head. Poor Jamie! How weak he is."

In the train Jamie took out Hubert's Shelley and turning to *Alastor,* read:—"Among those who attempt to exist without human sympathy, the pure and tender-hearted perish through the intensity and passion of their search after its communities, when the vacancy of their spirit suddenly makes itself felt. All else, selfish, blind and torpid, are those unforeseeing multitudes, who constitute, together with their own, the lasting misery and loneliness of the world. Those who love not their fellow-beings live unfruitful lives and prepare for their old age a miserable grave." Looking up from his book across at Tom he said to himself: "Morally dead." Did the cap fit Tom? O! It fitted Andrew! It fitted Andrew. It was fine to have Andrew fitted after all these years. It settled him. He was no more to be hated, no more to be feared; no more would his name rouse resentment. He was not above humanity as he had pretended, but rather below it. Morally dead! He could only share in humanity its dear, tragic, lovable absurdity: and that Jamie had begun passionately to appreciate, as much, to his credit be it said, in himself as in others. There were exceptions it is true. Tom was one of them. He was so rigid: his world did, to all appearances, so perfectly fit in with his belief in a God who was creator, law-giver

and judge, and had made the world awry for the pleasure of showing later on how easily it could be straightened out. And Tom was respectable: there was something dignified and distinguished about him; he might be only a cotton goods merchant but he looked and behaved like a diplomatist, one whose appearance might almost make a nation feel most favoured. Why must he take everything so seriously? Perhaps ambassadors always do. And Tom certainly was an ambassador. He had been sent to reclaim his brother back from the world of lost souls, to that of souls intent on being saved. Jamie laughed. "O Tom!" he said, "you look as black as the sky outside. Why should my folly, if you must call it so, worrit you? I'll pay for it, never fear."—"No doubt of that," replied Tom, "but it is a law of nature that the innocent suffer with the guilty."—"Tut! It is time Nature was a little improved on."—"I wish," said Tom, almost affectionately, for the walk through the snow had done him good and jogged his sluggish liver, "I wish you would give up Hubert as a mark of respect for Uncle Andrew. It would make mother happy."—"But, my dear Tom, I had no respect for him."—"He was a great power in Thrigsby in his day."—"I have no respect for Thrigsby."—"What I mean," said Tom with his heavy common-sense, "is that when Uncle Andrew is dead the old talk is sure to be revived and it will look bad for you, who are so well known, to be seen with Hubert."—"O! Tom! Tom! Be fair! Be generous if you can. When Andrew is dead and his wife is dead, the story belongs to Hubert and is his alone."—"Exactly," answered Tom, "and he alone must suffer for it. If you have anything to do with him, you will suffer too—and mother will suffer." Jamie was by now roused to argument: "Why not?" he said. "Why not? If this world is a vale of

suffering, why not? Why avoid the suffering you can see for another that you wot not of?"—"A manager of a bank," said Tom solemnly, "cannot be too careful in the choice of his friends."—"As it happens," retorted Jamie, "Hubert is one of our best clients and he has a better understanding of money as money than anyone on our staff." Tom was apparently a little mollified. "It beats me," he said, "it beats me how any man can be so successful in business, as Hubert undoubtedly is—and I don't mind telling you that, out of pure spite, he thwarted Andrew again and again—it beats me to know how a man can be so able and yet so indifferent to reputation. Think what Hubert might have been if he had not shown himself a blackguard, and allowed that woman to ruin his career. He can never stand for Parliament or the Town Council, and you know he had to resign from the Portico."—"He founded the Arts which is ten times as amusing."—"A drinking-shop," said Tom. "A drinking-shop. He is notorious when he might have been famous. He is a harlequin when he might have been——"—"Pantaloon!" The stream of Tom's eloquence was stopped for he was rather afraid of the gleam in his brother's eye, knowing that it portended what he had once called "philosophic wit."—"At all events," said Tom, "I hear what I hear and cannot help hearing, and after to-day's lamentable experience I hope you will forgive me if I say what I think to be for your good."—"Morally dead!" thought Jamie, and he saw at once that his brother could as well apply the words to him, with another meaning. There was a good deal to be said from Tom's point of view, but Jamie would be hanged if he would have him saying it.—"It seems to me," said Tom, "almost indecent to be going from that man's house to the house in which Andrew is lying at the point of death."—"Damn it,

man," cried Jamie, "when a man's dying isn't it indecent of the rest of us to be alive?"—"It is certainly chastening," answered Tom.—"I forgot to say good-bye to my friends," continued Jamie, not feeling at all chastened and only sorry to have been guilty of such discourtesy.

There was a long silence which Tom broke by saying: "He will receive his due at the great settlement."—"Who?"—"Andrew."—"I should say he had had it here below."—"He would have had but for Hubert. He never recovered from that blow."—"Neither has Hubert."—"Hubert? What had he to recover from?"—"The malicious tongues of Thrigsby and living with a woman who had lived with Andrew."—"Abominable! He's corrupted you, James. You can't touch pitch without being defiled."—"You can't touch a human being without becoming more human."—"I will not argue with you."—"No. You had better not."

Another silence. Tom finally exploded:—"You seem to think you have only yourself to consider. Have my mother's wishes, have her feelings no weight with you? Are you as cold as the snow out there? I have to fetch you from the society of your pimps and harlots——"

Jamie slid his Shelley into his pocket and pursed his lips and scanned Tom's face, behind which was a storm of indignant fury.—"Have a care, Tom," he said. "I value my friends and I do not choose them for the advantage they may bring me. If I were as drunken as poor Burns and you took it upon yourself to upbraid me I would strike the words from your lips. We're brothers, can we not make room for each other? I made room for you in Andrew's business, at home, and in the town I have never stood in your way." He would have said more but shyness overcame him. He was not used to exposing his thoughts and feelings to his brother.—

"What I mean to say is," said Tom, equally shy, "that mud thrown at you clings to us." Jamie replied with a chuckle: "But you'd never let me share your halo. And I'll be as loyal to my Hubert as you are to your Andrew."—"If you can," said Tom, "remember that Andrew is dying."

They had reached Thrigsby. Here the snow was already dirty slush, bitterly cold to the feet. It had been very cold in the train; a most dismal ending to a festive Christmas; and here was old Thrigsby at its foulest. The streets were empty except for an occasional drunken man. Jamie appreciated the contrast and, glaring at his brother, wondered if he never found anything amusing. Tom had cultivated an erect carriage, stiff as Peter Leslie engrossed in churchwardenship. His body hardly moved as his legs swung in their long stride, as regular as a pendulum. Tick-tock! Tick-tock! The Cartesian man in Thrigsby!—Jamie felt that his own walk was a mere shamble and to assert himself he felt that he must run, rather as Mrs. Leslie used to break into a trot when she was out walking with her husband.—"It's the same old Tommy," thought Jamie, "and there'll be no stopping him. Those thin legs of his would walk through anything that got in his way. He must have shin-bones like razors."—"I say, Tom," said he, "when you're mayor I hope you'll have the streets cleaned."—"I shall see to it that the whole city is clean mentally, morally and physically."—"God save us," thought Jamie, "the man's a scavenger."

When they reached home they found Tibby awaiting them. Margaret had gone off with John.—"How is she?" asked Jamie.—"In a terrible way. She must go, and would not stay, though I told her he was dead."—"Dead?" cried Tom.—"As the sun went down," said

Tibby.—"Did they send?" asked Tom.—"No. They didna send."—"She knew it," said Jamie, his eyes meeting Tibby's, and he felt also that she knew where he had been. What did she think of him? He knew that too. She was with him, on his side.

Tom went upstairs to get his Bible. Jamie told Tibby about the party.—"I often look through the lighted windows," said Tibby. "They are like a play to me."—"Did she want us to go after her?" asked he.—Tibby gave her strange grim smile: "Aye," she said, "she'll want you to have a sight of his corpse."—"I've never seen one," said Jamie in a whisper.—"I saw my father," answered Tibby, "and he was noble."—"If I'd loved the man, I would like it better," said Jamie.

No such scruple tormented Tom. He had his Bible and umbrella and marched away, Jamie following in his wake, rather like a dog that is not certain of being wanted. As he caught him up Tom said: "But for you I should not have been too late." Tick-tock went his legs and Jamie shambled along by his side, reduced to silence. They made the journey by the three omnibuses and came to Clibran Hall. There the butler admitted them and gave them cake and Madeira wine in the dining-room exactly as he used to do when they called; only he broke his habitual silence by saying: "He was a good master."—"Yes, yes," said Tom, sitting with his Bible open on his knee, a glass of wine in his hand and his mouth full of cake.

Margaret came in. Jamie went to her and kissed her cheek.—"He found you then?" she said. "Christmas day. I thought you would have been at home."—Jamie thought of the actors' Christmas, and how different and unfestal the feast had been in his own boyhood.—"I had promised my friends," he said.—With his mouth full

Tom said: "I found him with Hubert."—Margaret drew away, and cast her eyes up to the ceiling. Old Andrew lay in the room above. Jamie could find nothing to say.—"Did Tibby tell you? She knew. I did not believe her—but she knew. He was my eldest brother. Will you go up, one at a time?" Jamie stole away.

Outside a door he came on an old dog, a fat, stupid, cantankerous beast that Andrew had alternately overfed and kicked. It gazed up at Jamie forlornly and tried to follow him as he went in. He saw John, to his astonishment, kneeling by the bedside. John rose. He was genuinely moved. He muttered:—"Something about the old fellow. Intolerable loneliness, you know. May God be good to his spirit."—John stole out of the room, and Jamie went over to the bed. He was shocked by the dignity and power that had come into the old man's face. It seemed incredible to him and false; a trick, one last trick. He remembered Shelley's words.—"No love of his kind." Aloud, yet in a whisper, Jamie said: "I hated you, my friend, and now there is neither love nor hate, but only a bitter memory."—John had been taken in: dear, honest John, taken in by the trick of death, the dignity of the body reasserted when its abuse was at an end. Jamie was tortured with thoughts which he could not articulate. He still believed in a next world, and thought of Andrew already there beginning to scheme and plot and plan for the exploitation of his fellow-beings on that plane. Andrew's personality was so vigorously and dominantly expressed in that room, though death had transformed and disguised his body. More and more torturing were his thoughts, until at last tears came and Jamie stumbled away, out of the room, and stood fondling the dog.—"Poor dog!" he said.

"Good dog! Fond of him, were you? I wish I could have been."

Tom came up, went in and was out again in a moment. "The greatness of the man is there," he said, "what he really was, not what his unhappy life had made him." Jamie choked with emotion and disgust. Was Tom fool or hypocrite? Why had he not John's honesty and decent discretion?

They went down together to the cake and wine, when it was agreed that John should see to the funeral arrangements while Tom saw the lawyers and sent out the invitations. Jamie, it appeared, was to be punished by having nothing to do. Margaret would stay with John, who lived quite near, until the funeral: Tom announced his intention of remaining in the house; Jamie was to go home and inform Tibby of their plans. He asked, Was Tibby to come to the funeral?—No, she was not. What was she to Andrew or Andrew to her? Already it was plain to see that Tom was feeling the burden of his responsibilities.—"It will be," he said, "on Monday." —"It's over long for a corpse to lie," muttered Jamie.— "Tssh! Tssh!" clicked Tom. "His will be no ordinary funeral and your journalist friends will be busy even now with the obituaries."—The sneer touched Jamie, who said that his journalist friends were but little fleas upon big fleas.

He was glad to escape from Clibran Hall and from Tom so joyfully placing himself at the service of the dead; to walk through the Thrigsby that Andrew had helped to make; to feel that the live ass, himself, was better than the dead lion, and that the ass's life was more secure and easier for the lion's demise. He upbraided himself for the selfishness of these thoughts and tried to remember only the good in his successful and

distinguished kinsman. Having the privilege of Hubert's view, he found that difficult and decided that it was better left to the journalists. He found himself suddenly thinking quite simply of Andrew as a man, born in the usual way, living in the usual structure of flesh, bone and blood; endowed and troubled with the usual organs, and subject to the usual emotions. And life seemed large and easy and very nearly comprehensible. In justice he could not but think of himself in the same way: this was more difficult, but he wrestled with it. It was very unpleasant because it took the charm and colour away from Selina, and left him with a universe in which only Hubert and Mrs. Bulloch were solid figures. On the other hand there was that other universe wherein his mother and Andrew were paramount. This was becoming too complicated and he struggled back to the theology of his youth in which only the Lord held sway and human beings were as miserable vermin. He floundered from one to the other and it was with a feeling of touching solid ground once more that, when he reached the house in Harporley Road, the front door was opened to him and he saw Tibby's gaunt face apparently hanging in the darkness of the passage. She at any rate was real. She carried a whole mysterious world with her. You had but to look into her strange eyes to feel that she had a boundless knowledge. Aye, she was as positive a thing as dead Andrew lying there. Jamie hung up his hat on the peg assigned to his use. Tibby softly shut the door and followed him into the dining-room.—"It's true," said Jamie. "He's dead. My mother is to stay with John, and Tom is to take charge at the house."—"She'll be feeling it, will Margaret," said Tibby.—"Feeling what?" asked Jamie.—"Her own brother. He was much older than she, but

she'll be feeling it, with John married and all."—"My feeling is," said Jamie, "that we couldn't be more foreign to this place if it were Constantinople."—"You'll want your supper," muttered Tibby and she went out to come back in a moment with ham, bread and coffee. He ate and drank to please her but he was not hungry. He asked her not to leave him, and she stood by the table while he picked at his food and fidgeted in his chair.—"Tibby," he asked at length, "what do you think I am?"—"A true Lawrie," said she. "And the son of your father."—"And what will I be?" he asked as though he were appealing to an oracle.—"A grand man," said she.—"Then why," he asked expressively, "why am I treated as though I were already half in disgrace?"—"You didn't stand by Andrew," said she, "and—and—there's nothing that you do but we hear of it here. It's been a grief to us that you, the best and cleverest of the three, should be the least respected."—"To you, Tibby?"—"I'm no the one to be grieved."—"Do you respect me less?"—"No."—"*He* was respected; Andrew was respected: you can buy respect."—Jamie was in a great rage: he felt the house full of tongues against him.—"Why do you listen?" he cried.—"First it's one, then it's another," replied Tibby. "The deafest ears could not help but hear. The folk here think they are a model to all the world and any wickedness there may be in the town is not of their doing. They are all for work and church-going and will countenance no other."—"I do my work and I go to church," said Jamie, "but I'm damned if I'll make a song about it."—"There's the trouble," said Tibby, "and you may be sure they'll make a song about the rest."

They talked far into the night and Jamie at last lighted Tibby up to her room.—"There are times," he said,

"when I feel as if I had no other friend in the world but you. You alone seem not to laugh at me."—"I wouldn't be so sure of that," said she and she smiled. Jamie laughed and caught her in his arms and kissed her.—"I shall laugh at you, if you do that," said she, and he felt angry with himself. She was so bony, so ugly, that a kiss with her was out of place.

There were two steps outside her door. She stood above him with her candle in her hand, casting the shadow of her great nose over the right side of her face.—"You're a strange man, Jamie," she said, "and you will make a deal of trouble."—"Let them talk," he answered, "I've you for my friend and it does not matter what kind of fool I make of myself. The man of independent mind has the laugh of them all in the end. Andrew's dead and I'll see him buried and I'll know the truth of him against all the fools may say. He was a hypocrite and a sentimentalist and a vile husband, and the kind of fool who thinks that when he sees a fault in a better man than himself he has him measured."—Tibby astonished him by saying: "Don't be that kind of fool yourself, Jamie, and don't do what you did just now again." With that she slipped inside her door and locked it. Jamie felt that he had a great deal more to say. He tapped on the door but could get no answer. A white figure appeared on the attic stairs above him, calling in a frightened voice: "'Oo's there?" It was the little maid who assisted Tibby in the kitchen.—"Go to bed!" said Jamie. "Ooh! Mr. Lawrie, 'ow you did frighten me." The white figure sped upstairs and Jamie went to his room. The house was full of an ominous dreariness for him: full of Andrew and the cold emptiness which his death had created in the lives of those

who dwelt in it. His death? Had not his life created it to be shaped and defined by death?

In the morning there came a note from Selina to chide him for going away from Hubert's without saying good-bye to her. At once Jamie sat down and wrote to her as he had never done before, giving rein to his feelings. He poured out praises of her charms, her beauty, particularly the dimple in her shoulder-blade, her art, her subtle skill in the difficult and admirable business of living, and he declared that she was his only joy and comfort. Having said that much, his letter became a love letter and he was hardly responsible for its further composition. He posted it and received next morning another note in which Selina informed him coldly that Henry Acomb had invited her to go with him to London and that she had promised to go. Jamie rushed out of the house as Tibby was bringing in his breakfast and arrived at Selina's lodgings before she was up. Mrs. Bulloch appeared in a pink flannel dressing-gown with her hair in curl-papers torn out of the last number of *The Critic*. Jamie could see his *nom de plume* Quintus Flumen waving over her right eyebrow.—"Tell Selina I must see her," he cried.—"I could have told you what would happen," said Mrs. Bulloch, standing at the bottom of the stairs and blinking at Jamie as he fidgeted in the doorway of the sitting-room, "leaving her like that."—"But I wrote to explain. My brother——"—"Not all the brothers in Christendom are any excuse when it's a question of a girl's fancy."—"I want to see Selina."—"She's asleep, poor lamb, and has been crying these three days. We were at our wits' end what to do until Henry thought of London."—Jamie was too much excited to take that hint as to what had happened. Just as he had decided in his own mind that his passion for Selina

was the one bright spot in an otherwise darkened existence she was spirited away from him.—"I must and will see her," he declared, "if I have to wait until nightfall."—"I'll get dressed," cried Mrs. Bulloch. As she spoke there was a loud rat-tat on the door, which she opened to admit Henry Acomb, pale of face and wilder of eye than ever.—"How is she?" he asked, and drew up sharp on seeing Jamie.—"You have the effrontery?" he snapped, "you have broken my poor girl's heart and you have the effrontery!" He folded his arms and glared.

Mrs. Bulloch shuffled upstairs taking great care not to expose her legs.—"Come inside," said Jamie, "and tell me what has happened."—"I will not come inside," said Acomb. "I will not bandy words with you. You have trampled on a young and innocent, not to say ardent, affection and I have charged myself with the burden of your sin, though how the devil we are to get to London I don't know."—"Nonsense," said Jamie, "there is some absurd mistake. I have come to explain." Acomb was wildly excited by the part he was playing. He had been up all night. He had spent the day before with the weeping Selina in his arms. He had convinced himself and her that they had lighted one of the great passions of the world and though, to Selina, Jamie had become only a stepping-stone, to Acomb he was now an impediment and an offence.—"I have done nothing," said Jamie, "for which I am not prepared to make ample reparation."—Acomb spat in his face and roared: "Beast! Beast! Take your filthy lusts hence. The theatre, degraded though it is, shall not be the seraglio of you and such as you."—"Good God!" thought Jamie, utterly bewildered, "what have they been doing? Is the whole world tumbling down upon my head?"—He had no thought

of retaliation, as he wiped his face. Acomb was mad: there could be no contest.

From upstairs came Selina's clear voice calling: "Is that you, Henry?" Acomb bounded up three stairs at a time.

Mrs. Bulloch returned half dressed. She requested Jamie to fasten her up behind and he did so.—"Now," he said, "will you tell me what I have done?"—"Lor' bless your simple heart," said Mrs. Bulloch. "It ain't what you've done. It had to be and when you went away it only needed Henry to promise London, and the trick was done."—"But they can't go to London without a penny in the world."—"Ho! Can't they? I'm going too, contracted though I am for ten more weeks. This is no place for the likes of them with their ambitions."—Jamie could not help seeing that the old woman was coupling Selina and Acomb as easily as she had coupled Selina and himself. His dignity was rather outraged, though he had begun faintly to see the affair from her point of view and to understand that as the intruder into this strange world he was naturally ejected. But there remained his letter to Selina, the passion of which had flooded all his relations with her. That was not so lightly to be surrendered. She was, he believed she was, his only comfort. It had not struck him that Selina might desire to be more than that. He was filled with a sort of nausea and suffered terribly.—"I can explain," he said. "My brother came. Terrible news. My uncle was dying. I can explain, everything. It is absurd for her to go to London before her talent is formed."—"Henry Acomb," replied Mrs. Bulloch, "says she has genius."—"But *I* said she had something like genius, years ago," cried Jamie. "Do go and ask her to see me. There's a dear good old Ma! Tell her I'm in an agony of distress."

—"My poor young man," answered Mrs. Bulloch, "can't you see that it isn't the least little bit of good? It's 'Go,' with Selina. If you'd said 'Go' to her she'd have gone, even if it were to the Brazils. But you've left it to a better man than yourself to say 'Go,' and she's going." Jamie gulped, and he began to perceive stome meaning in his misfortunes. He was humiliated.—"Critics," said Mrs. Bulloch, "are all the same. They think because they write about us they know all there is to know. You never made a greater mistake in your life."—Jamie took up his hat. He said humbly: "Will you tell her that if she wishes to see me I will come at any time?"—"You couldn't say fairer than that," replied Mrs. Bulloch, "and I always did think well of you."—"Tell her," said he, "I wish her every happiness. Is he—is he—going to marry her?"—"Marry, no. There's a Mrs. Acomb in Wigan eating up half his earnings though she keeps a shop and makes a good thing of it."—That finished it for Jamie. The affair became entirely fantastic. He was left rueful but not altogether sorry for his emotional failure. He began to see how easily with more bluster and theatricality he could have carried the day. Acomb was so excited that he could easily have been outmatched, but a Selina who could be won on such terms was not worth the winning.—"I have made a fool of myself," said Jamie, "but I do not repent of one moment of it." He shook Mrs. Bulloch warmly by the hand, wished her all the luck in the world and plenty of fat parts and then walked over to see his brother John.

He found his mother and his brothers arguing as to whether the Allison-Greigs, who had remained friendly with Hubert, should be invited to the funeral. As Tom had already invited them the matter seemed to be beyond argument, and Sophia was saying so. Being pregnant

she had come to regard herself as precious, as John's behaviour had led her to think she was. It was her opportunity to assert herself and she had seized it. John's exaggerated attentiveness showed that he disliked the change in his household, but once Sophia had taken to the enormous horsehair sofa—(Tom's wedding present)—there was no getting her off it. She engaged another servant to look after her and John gave up tobacco. She presided. For the first time she had the pleasure of receiving her mother-in-law instead of yielding to her and giving up the house to her. She revelled in it and it gave her an acute pleasure to cut into their argument with the question:—"Have you asked them, Tom?" The Lawries had to abandon their argument and that was the situation when Jamie came in upon them from his own perplexities.

Sophia then directed conversation towards Andrew's will. How much had he left? John thought a hundred thousand, but Jamie, who was in a position to know more about it, doubled that figure.—"He won't have forgotten you, mother," said Tom. "He was very pleased with your spirit in paying off all your pension money."—Margaret, who had gone back to her deepest widow's weeds, sighed with satisfaction.—"I'm sure," she said, "there are others who need it more than I do, who have not such good sons."—"If I were he," said Jamie, "I should leave it all to Donald Greig who is the richest of his kinsmen. It could make no difference to him and would save a deal of recrimination."—"I suppose you think," growled Tom heavily, "you are left out of it."—"I'm sure I am," said John cheerfully, "though he may have remembered Sophia. Not that I care very much for I shall soon have shaken the dust of Thrigsby from my feet."—"Dust of Thrigsby?" cried Jamie. "What

do you mean?"—"As you are all here," replied John, "I may as well tell you. Murdochs have asked me to go out to Australia to open up a branch there."—"Australia!" said Margaret. "Why, they are all gaol-birds out there!"—"Only in Botany Bay. I'm to go to Victoria," answered John. "As soon as Sophia is ready we shall take ship and make the voyage."—Jamie's eyes shone with envy.—"Round the Good Hope?" he asked. —"Round the Good Hope," said John and he produced an atlas and laid it on Sophia's sofa where they all pored over it and learned the exact whereabouts of Australia.—"I suppose," said Margaret, "my wishes are not to be consulted."—John was rather annoyed with her.— "If you wish to have me dead," he said, "then tell me to stay. It is not only for the material advantage. Thrigsby is killing me. I saw the doctor the other day and he tells me I have only a lung and a half."— "John!" cried Margaret. Sophia looked maliciously and defiantly at her mother-in-law. Jamie met Tom's eyes. They were hard, hostile and inquisitive and in them Jamie read his own thought: "I'm all right, but what about you?"—"It was a great stroke of luck," said John, "the firm making that move just when they did." —"Luck! Yes," said Tom. "It almost looks like direct interposition. They pay you more, of course."—"Twice as much. So that, you see, I am not particularly interested in the old man's will."—"Of course," said Margaret, "I am glad to see you all getting on so well, and, Heaven knows, it is not my wish to stand in your way, but you are all working for other men and not doing as the Keiths did in their day."—"That, my dear mother," said Jamie, "is because we have to undo a good deal of what the Keiths did in their day."—"Nonsense, Jamie," said Tom, "the Keiths laid down the business

on sound lines. It is a question of development; that is all, development."—"After all," said Sophia, "the Keiths and the Greigs did not forget art. There is that to be said for them."—"They forgot Thrigsby," said John, "and the result is that it is unfit for a Christian or a delicate man, like your husband, to live in."—"You'll be saying next," cried, almost moaned Margaret, "that you are sorry I ever brought you here."—"I, at least," said Tom, "thank God that I am what I am and would not be otherwise."—"Dod!" cried Jamie with a flicker of passion. "If you'd only grant every man the right to say that."—"Some men," retorted Tom, "have not earned the right to say it."—Jamie was sitting on Sophia's sofa. She patted his shoulder and said: "I think you are very nice and if I had not married John I would have rather had you than any man." Jamie resented her words. They brought out into the open the secret attitude of the others towards him. He turned to his mother. "Will I tell Tibby you are to be home to-morrow after the funeral?"—"If I am well enough," replied Margaret.

So Jamie went away and spent a night and a morning of complete silence upon which Tibby did not once dare to break. He hoped against hope that Selina would write, but no word came. He envied John and thought foolishly that he would go with him and try his luck in Australia: but that would be to leave his mother to Tom, and to abandon Tibby to them. She, he knew, he felt certain was on his side, and though he knew not at all for what cause he was fighting, he recognised that because of Tibby's faith he must fight on.

His mind became a little clearer at the funeral, which was a function so solemn and impressive as to almost convince him that Tom was right. It was not that any-

body mourned, or that there was any great grief. What impressed and rather crushed Jamie was the unanimous opinion that Andrew Keith was a very great man with whom some of the light had gone out of the world. The Mayor of Thrigsby was present, officially; the new Dean of Thrigsby—for the town had recently become a city, with cathedral, bishop, canons, etc.—read the service at the graveside: the Presbyterians were represented: Sir John Clowes, the printer and proprietor of *The Thrigsby Post,* was there for the Governors of the Grammar School, and Professor Bosca for the Council of Thrigsby's College; the Chamber of Commerce, the Literary and Philosophical Society, the Boggart's Wood Brotherhood, all had their deputies. The relatives seemed comparatively unimportant though they drove in the first carriages, heavily draped, with plumed horses, out to the cemetery over against the Duke's Canal. No royalty could have had a more magnificent hearse, upon which were silver angels and black plumes, scrolls and carved draperies. And enormous though the hearse was it could not contain all the flowers, real and artificial, which had been sent. They filled two carriages. Hundreds of Andrew's work-people followed on foot, to watch the triumph which their laborious days had helped to create.

Margaret, Tom, John and Sophia were in the first carriage, Jamie finding himself ousted. He was hurt at first until he found that in the second carriage he would be with Donald Greig and Agnes and his Uncle Shiel. It was a cold, clear day, but sunny. Agnes, like all the women, had composed herself for the occasion. She looked very beautiful in black with her hands in her lap and in her hands her Prayer Book. She gave Jamie a swift smile that set him reeling, but at once she was like

a marble figure and not a word would she say. Donald had a black-edged handkerchief with which he fidgeted. Only Uncle Shiel would not be silent. He had made his first long railway journey and wanted to talk about it. He was sitting opposite Jamie and leaned forward to say: "You've grown into such fine people, I feel shy among you."—"You've no need to be that, Uncle Shiel." —"I knew Andrew was a grand man but I had no notion he was so grand as this, with the Mayor in his chain and all. I had never respect enough for the family to satisfy him, but I must confess it gives me great satisfaction to be here and see his glory, for I never believed in it before."—"Do you believe in it now?" asked Jamie. —"That's not a question to put to your uncle," replied Shiel with his sly twinkle, though he kept his face very solemn and looked out of the window as Donald was doing, vacantly, as though his part in the ceremony had robbed him of the power to receive impressions. Just before they reached the cemetery he remarked:—"In Edinburgh streets you can see hills and the castle. Is there nothing to be seen from Thrigsby streets?"—"Only streets," replied Jamie, "and chimneys. When you get used to the place they are quite enough."—"I would miss the birds," said Shiel, "and I feel dirty. I wonder would the men on my farm follow me to my grave."—Donald turned and glared at Shiel, whose talking had irritated him almost beyond endurance. Shiel said shyly: "Sorry," and blew his nose. Donald said: "To look at us people would think we were going to a wedding."—"Not with the corpse in front," answered Shiel.—"For shame!" cried Donald. "Your own brother! Have you no feeling?"—"Not on the surface," retorted Shiel, who hated the commercial Keiths and Greigs. Donald began to swell at the neck until Agnes leaned forward and

laid her hand on his.—"I'll haud my peace," said Shiel. "I've a long memory of Andrew, which is disquieting."

Jamie was very uneasy: Donald was obviously right; but his own thoughts were with Uncle Shiel who was a delight to him. Uncle Shiel stood for that in him which on this day of wrath and mourning was struggling to find expression, and made all the pomp and show of grief seem incomplete. In his mind his Uncle Shiel was ranged alongside Tibby. They had dignity, and they and they alone could honour the dead man because he was a man and dead, and not for his supposed virtues and achievements. All the same even he was shocked when, as they walked slowly towards the little chapel in the middle of the cemetery, Uncle Shiel said: "I can never go to a funeral without thinking that the undertaker men will go home playing cards in the hearse. I saw them doing that once and I have never forgotten it." And as they all sat in the chapel Jamie found himself wondering what they were all thinking. There was a certain uniformity in the expression of the people; the relatives had one kind of expression; the official mourners another; while the mill-hands who filled up the pews at the back gaped rather awfully. Only Tom's face was intelligent. His eyes were shining, his nostrils were distended, there was almost a smile on his lips.—"He has been waiting for this day," thought Jamie and he turned sick at heart as he saw Tom's eyes, cold and confident, turn on Agnes.

The Dean spoke a few words which developed into a sermon, for this was no ordinary funeral, and at last they were released from the chapel. It was wonderful to see the uniform expressions dropped for a moment as all rose, but, when the coffin was lifted, they were resumed and the thin line of men and women all in black

followed to the graveside. Great heavy clouds came up at the moment of the lowering. The light grew dim. The crowd was hushed and the Amens came out fearfully. There were sighs and tears. The Dean shuffled away his book into the pocket of his cassock, shook hands with the Mayor and with Donald Greig and hurried away.—"At any rate," thought Jamie with a sudden stab of malice, "that's the end of him." And he found then that he had become one with the crowd: he shared their interest: to know what had been the great man's last wishes. With this curiosity to relieve them the relatives and friends threw off their gloom and Donald Greig talked amiably to Uncle Shiel and asked after the price of oats. As they mounted into the carriage again Jamie thought he saw Hubert outside the gates of the cemetery. He could not be quite sure, but it was enough to rouse antagonism again. It would be like Hubert to wish to see the end of his enemy, to stand by his grave and think those bizarre thoughts of his. That made Jamie realise how strong Andrew had been: how strong all these people were in their unanimity and how dangerous was his instinct to oppose them. He wondered about Agnes: Was she one of them?—She began to talk to him, and asked him when he was coming to stay with them again. She had often thought of their talk by the lake, which since then had meant so much more to her. She had taken up painting again. Somehow Jamie had made her impatient of her idleness. Jamie was just getting over his shyness when Shiel, to escape from Donald's foolish questions, cut in with: "And are your paintings as pretty as yourself, Agnes?"—"She writes verses too," said Donald heavily. He squashed the happiness in Jamie, Shiel and Agnes.

The drive home was swift. Cake and Madeira wine

were partaken of in the drawing-room. A little table was set for Mr. Wilkinson, the lawyer of all the Keiths and all the Greigs and Allison-Greigs, and after three polite little coughs and a rap on the table in the manner of an auctioneer he began to read aloud in clear, mincing tones: "This is the last will and testament of me, Andrew Keith." The women sat absolutely impassive: the men with their heads forward and their eyes downcast, each as his name was mentioned giving an involuntary jerk. There were charitable bequests: a Keith scholarship was to be founded at the Grammar School to encourage the study of modern languages: a Keith exhibition was to be offered to the College of Corpus Christi, Oxford, to be open only to scholars of Thrigsby Grammar School: Thrigsby College was to have its Keith Professor of Political Economy: no relative was omitted except the Allison-Greigs who had openly continued to know Hubert: Donald Greig who had met Hubert secretly and often taken his advice in business matters was left forty thousand pounds: John came in for two thousand: Margaret for two thousand upon trust for her life with remainder to the residuary legatees: Tom was given five thousand pounds and a fifth share in the business: Mary and Maggie had one thousand between them: while Jamie was bequeathed Clibran Hall, the furniture and effects contained therein, and not a penny.

CHAPTER XXII

A LETTER FROM BERLIN

MARY wrote to her beloved brother:—"What you say about money seems to me true and profound. People do not care for it in itself, but they have spent so much energy and often so far lowered themselves to get it, that, when they have it, they must set some store by and even be jealous of it. All the same, I am glad of my five hundred pounds, for, when I have finished my work here I shall be able to go to Italy. I should go, I think, even if I had to walk, to follow in the footsteps of Goethe, who is, indeed, as Carlyle said, the greatest genius who has lived for three centuries. I am very happy here in Germany, glad to be away from common-sense to which, as I think I told you, in Edinburgh every-thing was reduced. Have you ever heard of Kant? He was of Scots descent and laid a solid basis for modern thought. You can have no idea how alive things are here: not only doing but thinking. What enthusiasm for ideas, and education! I think Berlin will be one of the great cities of the world. They are already begin-ning to challenge the supremacy of Paris, but Berlin will never be Germany as Paris is France. The German idea is bigger than that. I wish you could give me the idea of Thrigsby. I do not understand England at all. There is the keenest interest and curiosity here about the

English, the highest admiration too, but I cannot make them understand that Scotland is not and never will be England. So what is Thrigsby's idea? Democracy and liberty I know, but liberty to do what? To be rich? That does not seem enough. Who are the English thinkers? James Mill? You cannot set him up against Fichte. And why will not the English read Goethe? Are they afraid of being Europeans? Had they been better Europeans there would not have been this idiotic war. I see that John Bright is against it but only for insular reasons.—Non-intervention. Somehow, here on the Continent, war is easier to understand. And Germany could never go to war as lightly as we have done in the Crimea. Perhaps it is because there is no likelihood of its being fought out on our own territory and we have not imagination enough to feel the full horror of the death in battle and by sickness and through incompetence and mistakes of thousands of fine young men. It is all so far away from London, where, I suppose, the daily life goes on much the same. One feels here that life is more organised, and it is therefore more sensitive. I do believe Berlin feels this tragic folly more than London. It is a shock to the Germans. They had believed England to have more sense. They regard France and the French Government with suspicion. I do wish I knew what Thrigsby was thinking about it. For, surely, it must be bad for trade, though I am reluctant to believe that opinion in the North of England is susceptible to nothing but the fluctuations of trade. But you are not a good correspondent as regards matters in general. Your descriptions of the family are inimitable. I feel that I was myself at Andrew's funeral, with Uncle Shiel and Donald and Tom and John and his Sophia, whom, as you know, I do not like. I get a very good idea too

of your life in the bank, but also an uncomfortable feeling that it is swallowing you up, and to a man of your imagination that ought not to happen. Banking, I have heard it said here by revolutionary young men, should not be in private hands. Rothschild came from Frankfort and to all good Germans he is still a joke. I don't like to think of you being wasted on a joke. Indeed, my dear, your letters make me anxious because I feel in them a separate existence apart from that which you are ostensibly leading. This must mean that you are unhappy; not that I think individual unhappiness matters much; but it does mean that you are in revolt against your conditions, you in whom I know to live so many fine and generous qualities, so much suppleness of mind and genuine humour, qualities that in any healthy environment would carry a man far. They would here, I am sure. They might carry him into exile as they did poor Heine, but he would only gain in influence by that; and I am sure that influence is much more worth having than power. That is why I prefer your Cobden to your Bright, though when you compare either with Lassalle, they are stiff and rather mummified. They have not the magic which makes a man's work gain in vitality after his death. Hardheartedness is all very well in its way, but it is not the way of idealism and cannot lead to the Europe of Goethe's thought. I have begun to read Dante to compare him with Goethe, and I must say I think he was the greater poet, and stripped of his medievalism and the Church, which we *will not have,* his vision does very well even now. I'm not expecting you to be a Goethe or a Dante, though I do think it is time England repaid the world for her immense privileges: but I do want you to have something more than your excellent comic vision of Thrigsby. It is bad enough to think that the best

England can produce in literature is Charles Dickens' comic vision of London. It is all so self-centred, and came from bearing things which are unbearable. You will turn into a spinster, and Maggie and I are quite enough in one family. I suppose poor Maggie will never marry. She would never take off her wig to any man: and I, well—I am come down now to my modest childish ambition to have my house in the Cumberland Hills, what we used to call our Blue Mountains, though we did not know then that they were inhabited by Wordsworth and Coleridge and the Arnolds—not that I think much of the Arnolds.—I had the bound volume of *The Critic* you sent me the other day. Dramatic criticism! Pooh! What is there to criticise in vain silly actors? You should see what they make of Shakespeare here. You should read Lessing. The Germans do understand how to make fun of themselves, but since Cruikshank and Rowlandson did for Napoleon I don't believe the English have made fun of anything. So you see I do appreciate your comic vision though I am disappointed not to have a little more vision and a little less comic.—I am very hard at work translating and writing and keeping H. B. in touch with all the exciting philosophical events here. I eat a great deal for one so small. Sausage is a very good stand-by. But I find time to think of you much and fondly, groping my way to your innermost life, from which I do obstinately hope and believe something good will come, something really worth while. It was wonderfully malicious of old Andrew to leave you Clibran Hall, especially if, as you say, the district is now quite impossible as a residential quarter. But how fast Thrigsby must be growing, for I remember it as a little girl, all fields round these few mansions. And now mills and chimneys! Ah: well. Twenty years seem a

little time when one is fairly launched as we are. They fly so swiftly that one does not notice all the immense changes that take place. Berlin is growing too but they make it grow more or less as they wish it to. It is nowhere so hopelessly muddled and sordid as Thrigsby, but then the Germans are not hard-headed and do not believe in any sort of rough and ready success. They will take their time and do what they set out to do thoroughly. They are organised, as I said, and sensitive and can feel disaster coming and make every preparation for it. That is their virtue both domestically and politically. They have much to learn from us in manners, but in living which is more important, it is we who have everything to learn. All the same, I do not like German women. They are emotionally greedy and they make marriage a torment.—I am longing to get you married. You must not leave it to John to provide the next generation of the Lawries. Tom's children will be such that I dread being their Aunt. I am even tempted to come over and make a match for you: someone will have to do it, for, with your shyness, you will never do it for yourself—not satisfactorily. She must be rich and beautiful and she must realise that men are sensitive and not merely conceited, but she must be strong and be prepared to live on her own resources, and not expect you to do all the thinking and all the emotion and all the passion. And she must not be too capable. A woman so easily creates her own little world of material things, which, being a kind of garment for herself, no one else can possibly share. Above all she must neither admire nor expect to be admired. True love and admiration are not housemates. I don't think any one ever understood that except Shakespeare, but then he did understand what men and women require of each other. Am I

right? Can I worry you, torment you, exasperate you into giving me a frank, full and honest answer?—Go on with your comic history of the progress of Thomas Lawrie. I love it. But more I should love the true and passionate history of James Lawrie. I would like to say to my German friends: This is the kind of man we are breeding in the British Isles. You call it chaos but it is the confusion of creation. The French may theorise, you may organise, but the English act. I may be Goethe mad, but I love you much more than Goethe."

"I wonder," said Margaret, as Jamie folded up the letter, "what Mary can find to say to you that she does not say to the rest of us."—"Havers!" said Jamie. "She's a grand haverer, is Mary. She's read so many books."

CHAPTER XXIII

THE EMPTY HOUSE.

AS Jamie said in a letter to Mary: "Tom has crystallised." When he wrote *I* he knew perfectly what he meant; thousands of pounds in the bank, a room of his own at Keith Bros. & Stevenson, Gladstonian opinions, membership of the Portico, the best tailor in Thrigsby, a wide circle of wealthy acquaintances, half-a-dozen houses where he could dine well, and excellent prospects, indeed, an assured future unmenaced by unreasonable ambitions. He was a delight to his mother and she aided and abetted him in his tacit assumption of the headship of the family. He became dictatorial and had the food and the furniture of the house exactly to his liking. He condescended to offer Jamie his advice in the matter of his inheritance of Clibran Hall.—"I should sell," he said.—"I'm getting quite fond of my white elephant," replied Jamie.—"But it will cost you an unwarrantable amount in repairs. You cannot possibly hope to find a good tenant. As a dwelling-house your only chance would be to turn it into a brothel."—Tom wore his rather foolish sardonic smile.—"I've no desire to oblige you and your friends," replied Jamie.—"I was joking," said Tom.—"You do it with an ill grace," said Jamie.—"Seriously," continued Tom standing in his favourite attitude in front of the fireplace, "I should sell

the furniture and fittings, and hang on to the old place for a little. Its time is not yet come. In a year or so it will be wanted for a factory site and then you should be able to hold out for your own terms. I should not sell at once, if I were you. There's the farm to go between Clibran and Jewsbury's. When that has gone you will come into your own."—"I'll do what I think fit," replied Jamie, and he did nothing. One or two of the pictures he presented to the Municipal Art Gallery—a Landseer and a Mulready. The books he brought home to his study: Andrew must have bought the books proper to a gentleman's library by the yard, for there was a wonderfully complete collection, the classics, Heine, Buckle, Macaulay, Berkeley, Locke, Bishop Butler, Pope, Swift, Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, Sterne, Scott, Keats, Byron, Martin Tupper, Tennyson, and, greatest prize of all to Jamie, a noble edition of the *Faerie Queene*. He would not have taken all Tom's thousands for that. Most astonishing of all was a fine collection of engravings, prints and etchings, among them a Dürer and a Rembrandt which Jamie had framed and sent as a present to Agnes. As he sent no word with them she thought they were from Tom and wrote to thank him for them, and Tom no more thought of correcting the mistake than he would have corrected a muddle in business which turned to his advantage.

Jamie gave his mother and Mrs. Leslie and many other of his friends their choice among the furniture and saw Clibran Hall gradually denuded. And nothing happened. Nobody wanted the huge ugly house and he used it as a place of escape when his thoughts began to tease and shake him, for the foolish end to the Selina affair had not let him off lightly. He missed her colour and through her he too had to a certain extent crystallised. The ab-

surd longings, the heady idealism of youth were no longer enough for him. Something of his nature was gone with Selina, and was hers for ever, though she might not need it or even be aware of it. Whithersoever his affections moved it must be towards romance, they must be creative and take life and love as their raw material and never merely be absorbed by them. He was filled with vague and immense desires, which made his sister Mary's easy summary of his needs and her exacting requirements of him maddeningly cool and cold. But through the eyes of no one else had he any opportunity of seeing himself: admiration he had in plenty from both women and men; through Hubert he was always able to see himself in caricature; but Hubert as much as Mary was blind to the strange and incomprehensible eager element in himself by and for which, as he was slowly driven to see, he lived. He was nearest to comprehension of it when he was alone in Clibran Hall. There he could realise the mocking discrepancy between the old dreams he had shared with his mother and the realisation that was slowly taking place. England had been and still was to be a place dominated by the Keiths. It was to be his lot in life to share and continue that domination. He was to end his days in a house like Clibran Hall, to be buried as Andrew had been, to have, as Andrew soon would have, his statue in the Town Hall Square. He would sit in Andrew's study and enjoy the humour of it. He had Clibran Hall, by Andrew's last sardonic stroke, but empty, crowded in on all sides by the unpleasing manifestations of industrialism, the ugliness and squalor upon which it built its success. In the garden grew foul docks and smoky nettles with here and there an obstinate garden plant, a rose or a hollyhock, that would not be denied.—How swiftly wild

nature asserted itself: weeds everywhere, and the neat gravel overgrown with grass. And the wild nature in man? Would not that too take its revenge?—Jamie had been reading Erasmus Darwin and the Lord of his young religion had departed out of his mind for ever. He had been helped out by public events. No God could both bless England and allow the Crimean War.—Not that Jamie was unpatriotic: he had been as excited as any of them, as uncritically ready to assume vile barbarism in the Russians because they wished to take Constantinople from the gentle Turk in order the more dreadfully to threaten India. Our James, like other good and true men, was not consistent either mentally or emotionally. So far as he took any interest in politics he was a Disraelian; Tom was a Gladstonian and indeed there was something repulsive about English Liberalism. It was so infernally complacent. Better a little vulgar swagger than its super-Christian humility.—So Jamie joined the vulgar swagger and partly out of good nature, partly out of genuine sensibility to the new excitement of Imperialism, joined the Volunteers and wore a uniform on Saturdays. He trimmed his beard to be like Lord Raglan's and began vaguely to feel that he was making a fool of himself. This was quite pleasant: hundreds of others were doing it too; and they were doing it publicly. England, after all, was an Empire and not what it seemed to be, a collection of ugly cities set in a lovely but impoverished country.

It was generally on Saturdays after his drill or march through the streets that Jamie would take refuge at Clibran Hall, in his tunic and shako, generally with the jeers of little boys ringing in his ears. He could not go home from the jeering little boys to Tom's sarcasms. In the Volunteer movement Tom had found a subject

entirely to his liking.—"Playing at soldiers. Either be a soldier and go and die of scrofula outside Sevastopol, or leave it alone. Defend the country? Whom against? Napoleon couldn't attack it, and, if he couldn't, who could? Napoleon was quite right, England was a shop. Europe's shop. Europe would never be fool enough to wreck it. As for this nonsense about Empire, he had no patience with it. Directly people called themselves an Empire they began to decline and fall. There was no help for it. When a nation called itself an Empire it was a sign that it had reached its zenith: it had lost its sense of proportion and would sooner or later make itself such a nuisance to the world that the world would not stand it any longer."—"At all events," said Margaret, "I think Jamie looks very handsome in his uniform."—"It makes me sick," said Tom, "to see him on a Saturday afternoon slinking out of the house dressed up like a play-actor."—"It has made a great difference in your health, hasn't it, Jamie?" asked Margaret.

It was to avoid such scenes as this that he escaped. At first he had gone to John's where Sophia applauded and admired him, and John would be much more gentle and sensible. He had become very kind, had John, since his lungs had begun to disappear. He would say: "I don't know where it's going to end. We thrashed Boney without making any to-do about it. It was a job that had to be done. We took our licking in America in very good part; but I don't like this new spirit at all. It isn't manly. It isn't English. It is dangerous, and it is going to be very expensive. We can do the other nations very nicely over the counter. We don't need to threaten them or shake the sword at them. We've got to get rich so as to have time for culture, and as little as possible should we get rich at other people's expense.

I'm a Free Trade man, as you know, and I believe that if we give the others a good lead they'll follow. I'm not in Palmerston's confidence but this Crimean business looks to me like turning our backs on our own tradition. Palmerston's a fool and a high and dry old Tory and doesn't see that the English tradition has passed out of the hands of his class, into the hands of men with better brains, more experience and a closer contact with life as it is lived by the many, who ultimately, whether you like them or not—and I don't—are the people who matter. He has landed us in this mess to assert his class and I shouldn't be surprised if he hasn't smashed old England as the leader of the world, though she'll go on getting richer and richer. I know, if I were a Dutchman or a Swede or an Austrian, I should find it hard to believe in old England ever again. We've become just like the rest of them, you see."—"Still," said Jamie, "it may be a mistake, but I don't like this settling down to the shop, and we are Europeans and if Europe has to go through the fire we have to go through it too."—"But we've done it," said John. "We went through our fire in the Civil War, and we settled down to the rights of man long before the Frenchies began to screech about it. When the divine right of kings went out the divine rights of men came in. That is how I look at it and the rest of the world will slowly come into line. What is America but the creation of the few stubborn Englishmen who were in too great a hurry to see the new idea take shape in the old country?"

There were many such talks, and Jamie and John became good friends in the few months before the latter's departure with Sophia and their first-born, Angus, for Australia. When they were gone Jamie had no other refuge than his own solitude. He would return with

pipe and tobacco to Clibran Hall, take off his tunic and shako—if it were Saturday—and lay them on a chair on the other side of the fireplace and look at them.—The Queen's Uniform: and he would remember a saying of Cobbett's to the effect that the Queen had everything: her Majesty's Judges, her Majesty's Army, her Majesty's Navy, her Majesty's Government, her Majesty's Prisons, while, when it came to Debt, that was National. Then he would try to account for the pleasure he had in wearing her Majesty's uniform, though he was sure he would never desire to kill even the vilest of her Majesty's enemies. First of all there was the pleasure of being one of many; it was good to walk in a row of men and feel at the first glance that he had something in common with them, even if it were only a matter of clothes. In ordinary life, there were so many with whom he had nothing in common. How little he knew even of his mother and his brothers; only with Mary was there any real sharing of mind or feeling. Did the others mind? Were they content with their narrow piety and close pursuit of their profitable duty? Was there nothing outside their Puritanism but frivolity? Escaping Andrew, was there no alternative but Hubert? He was dissatisfied with Hubert who had seemed to despise him for suffering so much over the loss of Selina, who had gone, as she said, with Henry Acomb and Mrs. Bulloch and was swallowed up in the remote brilliance of London.—There were times when Jamie felt so desolate and dissatisfied with the respectable monotony of his life that he often thought almost seriously of going for a soldier indeed, and when there began to come the flood of war verses his martial spirit was stirred and he wrote verses too and sent them up to the London papers, hoping to begin a career with them. But they never

appeared. The fame of Quintus Flumen was local, and indeed London in those days was hardly more aware of Thrigsby than of Penmaenmawr. Money and abominable ideas came out of Thrigsby: it was vulgar because of the one and obnoxious because of the other.—His poems rejected, his offering to Agnes despised; Andrew's will and Donald's behaviour had showed only too plainly where the Lawries stood; there was nothing for it, thought Jamie, but to enlist. Unhappily, however, it was impossible to enlist as a General and nothing less would satisfy his mother.—Madame Mère! What did she make of Napoleon? Was she disappointed that her brilliant second son had not fulfilled some secret ambition for him? Perhaps she had thought her Napoleon would make a nice little priest, exactly as Margaret had thought her eldest-born would make a good little merchant.

Sometimes he would write poems, not of the patriotic kind; verses beginning "Selina has my heart," but they were all false and he knew them to be so and tore them up. Other times he would work, writing either his dramatic criticism or one of a series of articles he had begun for the new *Thrigsby Weekly Post* on Banks and Bankers. Again he would wander through the great empty house, from room to room, imagining the life that had been in them. Andrew had bought it, he knew, on the occasion of his marriage. It must have seemed the solid triumph of his life. No one, not even much richer men, had such houses. No one had such huge, such massive furniture as had once filled it. No one slept in such beds as that leviathan four-poster which had dominated and obscured the nuptial chamber. The mockery of that bed! A rack on which a miserable woman had been tortured! And with that tragedy at the heart of its life

what splendour and ostentation, what feasts, what a show of princely hospitality there must have been. And suppose, thought Jamie, suppose there had been no Hubert, no crisis, no climax: suppose Andrew's life had been undisturbed, suppose he and Elisabeth had had children: would the tragedy have been any less? Would the house have been less grim and empty?—Andrew was still very much alive: he was still in Jamie's way, though the fear of him was gone. It was wonderful how its going made thought easier and sweeter the contemplation of Andrew's tragedy. Torment can be sweet if it be shot, however dimly, with the light of understanding, and here there was at least the will to understand, and, finally, the passionate desire. Jamie found himself living in that old story. His mother had wished him to live by and from Andrew Keith, to occupy that corner of the world which Andrew had prepared. He had obliged her more thoroughly than she could possibly imagine. He must know what that world was like before he could live in it. Neither Andrew nor Margaret could or would give him any clue to it. He must find his own. What had they done to make entrance so difficult? Was the gulf between the generations impassable? Jamie often thought sadly of his mother's face, how little meaning its expressions could convey to him, how very little he knew of the life behind it, that had made it, and how easy it was to fill the void of his ignorance with charming fantasy. She was not such a mother as Mrs. Leslie was to her children, but how delightful it would have been to pretend that she was, and yet how disgusting too! For Margaret was much finer than that, stronger, prouder, bolder, hugging the griefs her children brought her and never acquiescing in their misdeeds. Margaret was Biblical; Mrs. Leslie Dickensian. There was a weak-

ening in the attempt to make a philosophy of palliation. Jamie needed the Biblical idea of his mother, her own idea of herself, for his task of unravelling the Andrew story.—It became his dearest joy. For months together he needed no other life. It came very near to Mary's description of the philosophic life, but it was not disinterested. He had accepted Andrew's world and according to his nature had to make the best of it. He envied Tom, who was so constituted that he could take the money and the success and leave the rest. He envied John who could reject the whole creation. Yet he would have changed with neither. This employment of his was its own reward. It was as near to art, he began vaguely to perceive, as he would ever go. He often laughed to himself as he thought that he was passing through the crisis of his life; the mental crisis coinciding with the physical entrance into maturity. What luck, he thought, that he was not married! All that could come later, when he had emerged triumphant over the secret of the world he had inherited: the moral issue settled.—Ah! the money and the success would be worth while then. He would know what to do with them. Otherwise they were trash and he would be overwhelmed by them as Andrew had been and Tom bade fair to be. And, in the moments when he was sure of his triumph, he would feel sorry for Tom.

One night as he returned from prowling through the house to the study he sat at Andrew's desk and began to work. His dramatic criticisms had lately become rather intellectual and academic and he took scanty notice of the actors. Currie Bigge had complained:—"I don't want you to be vulgar, but you must be readable."—He tried to make himself readable and imitated Lamb's manner, caught from him some of his enthusiasm for acting

as acting without reference to the general effect of the play. Even so it was heavy work and he was often stopped for want of a word. Looking round the desk, he found himself wondering whether it had not a secret drawer and he spent over an hour searching. At last in one of the pigeon-holes he found a crack, inserted his fingernail and pressed a spring. Down fell an inlaid panel to disclose an aperture full of papers and books.

Currie Bigge had to do without his dramatic criticism that week. There were letters, notes, diaries, cuttings from newspapers, reports of public utterances, all the documents which could be a source of pride to old Andrew. Jamie found them of no great interest until he came to the diaries, a series covering a period of over fifty years, though pages and pages were filled with nothing more than entries like: "Better weather. Napoleon dead and a good job too." Or, "Gave orders for new boiler; engineer says two not enough. Rubbish. Must see about coal supply. Prince Consort turning out better than I expected," or "Afraid the railway business is being overdone. After all, there is a limit and water will remain best for heavy goods. Must take to hunting. Kennedy is doing it and goes down to his warehouse in riding-boots and breeches."—The hunting led to Elisabeth, an Adlington, of an old family of squires upon whose estate coal had been discovered. There was an entry: "England's wealth (1) agriculture, (2) coal, (3) cotton. (1) and (2) Adlington: (3) A. K. Elisabeth or Agatha? Agatha is the more comely, but Elisabeth is the more sensible. Agatha would give herself airs. She would insist on the superiority of coal and birth over cotton and brains. She is not beautiful enough to justify the sacrifice. I want a wife that Thrigsby will look up to, but not one who will look down on Thrigsby.

I should say E. would be the better breeder."—Not much romance about old Andrew, and where was his wonderful trick of self-deception? Perhaps that developed later. He had a certain private humour that reminded Jamie of Tom. There were many pages that Tom might have written. The courtship was fully recorded:—"Squire Adlington not averse. Financial position quite up to the mark.—Proposed and honourably refused—Mr. Keith, I am fully aware of the honour you do me—O! but she has the daintiest ankle!—Shall wait six weeks and try again. Good weather, good scent, good run. I can't think what possesses that fellow Cobden, who has made himself a good position and a fair business, to go running about the country. He'll ruin it as well as himself if he does not take care. Fortunately the people will never listen to a demagogue who has taken care to fill his own pockets first. There always will be Haves and Have-nots and they are as different as the sexes. I am a Have, Shiel is a Have-not, and we shall never understand each other. I am a Have, Madame Elisabeth, and I mean to have you."—Jamie hurried on to the next proposal:—"Refused, but argued. Love not out of the question, as E. seems to have feared. Wives love their husbands, because they are wived by them. Could not of course explain this, but was as tender as it is in my nature to be. Perfectly sound man, I explained, sound in wind, limb and religion. Birth Scots, and therefore, when not illegitimate, good enough. Keiths at Naseby. Where were the Adlingtons then? I asked and she with her dearest smile replied: 'At Adlington.'—I find she likes to laugh. Dull life at Adlington, I fancy. Father drinks. No wonder, if the family has been there two hundred years and more. And to think that Thrigsby is only fourteen miles away!"—"She reads Jane Austen,

whom I cannot stomach. Fancy that mild babble being written while all Europe was in a blaze. I suppose she would wish me to be like Captain Wentworth. Have told the old father and left it to him to bring her to reason." —"Adlington came to see me to-day to suggest Agatha. I insist on Elisabeth. Let him bring her to town to see what money can do there."—In the end he wore down Elisabeth's resistance. There were no entries in the diary for some weeks until at last came: "Married. Good. Liverpool, I can see, is going to be an infernal nuisance. Shall give up hunting. It is expensive and takes up too much time. Trouble in Ireland. There is always trouble in Ireland, and we have too many Irish here."—After that there was no mention of Elisabeth except three years later:—"E. has had a miscarriage! Damn it!"

For years then the diaries rambled on, an odd commentary on the period, remarkable more for what it omitted than for what it mentioned. Tremendous events were only remarked on in so far as they affected the buying and selling of cotton. The only indication of the growing tragedy was the increasing bitterness of the sardonic note in the writer's humour. He was often brilliant, sometimes coarse and the jests made Jamie shout with laughter as he sat in the empty house opposite his tunic and shako. Suddenly almost the whole diary was occupied with the entry of one day: "She came to me this morning and asked me to stay as she had something important to say to me. I told her bed was the place for that. In a very low voice she said she had never admired me. She informed me that I was vulgar, hard, insensitive, grasping, and that the love I had offered her was an insult to a woman. I refused to listen to more and left her to recover herself. I am what I am,

like Dean Swift. All the same she had spoiled my appetite either for work or for my victuals. When I returned home I found a letter to say that she had gone with her lover, Hubert, of all people; Hubert, the petticoat-hunter, Hubert, the effeminate dandy, Hubert, whom I used to tip when he went back to school! The woman's a whore and has dishonoured me. My God! does she know what she has done? Her own family: they won't like having bred a whore. I am almost afraid of my own rage. I gave her everything she wanted. She had her own carriage. Fool that I am! I knew what was going on, but would never admit it to myself. I shall be laughed at. Laugh then! Go on, laugh! I'll laugh at myself first! Now you can't hurt me. I'm laughing. D'ye think I set much store by this marriage? It was barren." —Jamie could hardly read through his excitement. O! the strong obstinate vanity of the man! He would not admit either his own fault or his own grief. The woman was a whore, she had injured Hubert far more than she had hurt him. Thrigsby might snigger to itself, but openly it would say: "Poor Keith! He doted on that wife of his." They would remember, as he was doing, her faults and forget her virtues, her charm, her kindness, the gracious hospitality they had received at her hands. *Her* hospitality? He paid for it.—That was the final argument behind which, sore and bewildered, Andrew took refuge. Jamie could feel the soreness and the bewilderment and respond, but what infuriated him was that he was given no clue to Elisabeth's mind and feelings, while Hubert was for Andrew non-existent. The episode spoiled his appetite, but when he realised that Thrigsby would take his view of the affair he recovered himself and set about making more money and creating

for himself a fine official position so that Elisabeth should feel what she had missed.

It amused Jamie to recollect that when Selina had jilted him his first impulse had been to dismiss her angrily as worthless, and he wondered if he would have felt the same if he had been married to Selina. And he tried to work out the tragedy of Andrew with the aid of his own experience: not very successfully until he began painfully to think that Selina might have left him for the same reason which had led Elisabeth to abandon her husband. He could see in himself some of the same blind humourless egoism, though it had not yet been so fatal, but he did not believe that Selina could have perceived it in him and suffered from it. No: he decided—she had left him for a bird of her own feather. But might not that have been the case with Elisabeth? It is absurd to ascribe superhuman insight to the female. What kind of woman would attract and bind Hubert? And where would she touch him? In his pity and chivalry, thought Jamie, feeling that he was coming near the heart of the mystery. Of course, passion might very easily have little to do with it, and there would lie its pity, there the fascination of the imbroglio to Hubert. Jamie felt sick at heart: Andrew cold as ice; Hubert cold as stone; the woman between them. Ah! that was the sting of it, that the cause of the obsession. A fine thrilling story and the end of it was Andrew making money, Hubert making money, and the woman dead. There was no possibility anywhere of life for her. Hubert seemed as detestable as Andrew.

Jamie whistled "The Russians shall not get to Constantinople" as he lay back and thought it over.—"So this," he thought, "is what lay beyond the Blue Mountains; this is what they have made of life and it doesn't

look as if we were going to make it much better. John with his lungs half gone: Tom turning into one huge trouser-pocket full of money: myself running after coloured gas-light dreams: mother eating her heart out because the Lawries aren't as important as the Keiths: and Tibby—oh! well, there's always Tibby."—In a shifting, uneasy and changing world, that most inconsiderately refused to allow itself to be understood, he clung to Tibby as a comprehensible reality, though he was as ignorant of the detail of her life as of anyone's.—"Good God!" he said to himself, "I don't know what is going on in my own life and if that knowledge is impossible how can I expect to have any other?"

CHAPTER XXIV

FANNY SHAW

THE Saturday soldiers might be jeered at by little boys as they marched on parade through the streets with the Colonel on horseback and a band with a real drum-major going before. The Colonel of the 3rd V.B.T.R. was a wealthy man and liked everything well done. Wealthy too were many of the rank and file and if their regiment were not going to have a chance of proving its mettle in the war, it should at least make a show in the peaceful city of Thrigsby, and give the people something for the money the war was costing and remind them that the world was not subdued by Waterloo. There were public functions too. The Volunteers lined the streets when an august personage visited Thrigsby, and was received by the Mayor, the Town Clerk, the Recorder, and the City Treasurer. The Volunteers had a Sunday set apart for them in the Cathedral; a Sunday in May, and then, when the greengrocers' shops were gay with hyacinths and daffodils and tulips and oranges and lemons, cauliflowers and turnip-tops, then the five thousand volunteers blossomed like flowers and, if it did not rain, had a grand parade through the streets on Saturday, and assembled on Sunday morning outside the Cathedral under the Cromwell statue, while the massed bands played *God Save the Queen* and the *Old Hun-*

dredth. In August they went into camp and learned the stern art of war.

Jamie was very soon a sergeant and was offered a commission which, however, he refused. He never liked the rich young men of Thrigsby and preferred the society of the clerks, warehousemen and artisans who filled the ranks and were more serious and dutiful in their devotion to the Empire on which the sun never sets. The 3rd V.B.T.R. took a pride in itself and on its field days behaved as though there really were Russians hiding in the ditches and behind the hedges of Claypit Fields, whither they marched without their band and headed by sappers armed with axes and shovels, and followed by an ambulance. Then the Colonel would ride behind and the Adjutant also would be on horseback and together they would conduct operations, which always ended in the storming either of the dismantled brick-fields or of the little wood at the end of the fields beyond which lie the railway and the village of Marrowfield that Thrigsby had caught in its drifting net of streets. In the wood in springtime were primroses, violets, sorrel and bluebells. And there was a little pond wherein were Jack-sharp and tadpoles and newts.

On a day in spring preparatory to the storming of the wood Jamie was sent forward to reconnoitre for the enemy. He crept up, taking advantage of every piece of cover, crawled through not over the fence, up the hill and over the brow to find two wide blue eyes staring up at him out of a pale face. There was fear in them until he grinned. The child looked so charming there in the midst of a pool of bluebells. She had a great bunch of them in her lap and had threaded a long necklace of others which hung over her shoulders and shone in her ruddy mane of hair.—"How pretty they are!"

said Jamie, forgetting all about his regiment.—"Yes. I brought my little brother to catch Jack-sharps. You can catch them nearer home than this but there aren't any bluebells there. I thought at first you were a parkie."—"No. I'm a soldier—sometimes."—"Are the Russians going to win?"—"I think not." Jamie had taken a seat by her side. She went on picking the blue flowers, their juice staining her thin little red fingers. "I think not," he said. "They can't beat the English and the French."—"The English have never been beaten, have they?"—"They don't know it when they have been," said he, compromising. "What's your name?"—"Fanny Shaw."—"Where do you live?"—"69 Greenhill Lane, Summerheys."—"That's a long way from here."—"Yes. But I only come once a year when the bluebells are out. There aren't many know of this wood."—"I didn't know it had bluebells and dear little girls growing in it."—She said solemnly: "I do pretend sometimes that I grew in it, but of course I didn't."—"You should tie up your hair with bluebells; then you would really feel like it."—The child, still solemn, adopted the suggestion and Jamie assisted her. He was interrupted in this employment by a hullabaloo from the corner of the wood and leaping to his feet he saw that the small boy, Fanny's brother, had fallen into the pond and was caught in its oozy bottom. Down he rushed, pulled the boy out, brought him back to his sister and was wiping him down when he heard the thud of horses' hoofs and found his Colonel standing above him. He had still forgotten all about his regiment, did not remember to rise to the salute, and went on wiping the muddy boy and pacifying the girl's fears.—"Sergeant Lawrie!" roared the Colonel. "Sergeant Lawrie! Damn it, sir, we've been waiting over half-an-hour for you to return and report. You've

spoiled the attack, sir, betrayed us to the enemy, annihilated the whole regiment."—"On the contrary, sir," said Jamie beginning to enjoy the situation, "I have occupied the position single-handed."—"Confound your impudence," shouted the Colonel. "I sent you here as a scout, not as a nursemaid."—The boy began to cry and Fanny taking him by the hand hurried away, trampling, in her alarm, the bluebells underfoot. Jamie turned to watch her go. It seemed such a shame to him to turn the child out of the wood.—" 'Tention!" shouted the Colonel. The Adjutant and some of the soldiers came up. The Colonel appealed to the Adjutant: "Can I place this man under arrest? He has been infernally insolent." The Adjutant scratched his chin: "I don't know, sir. It isn't as if we were Regulars. I think you can tell him to consider himself under arrest." The other men grinned. The Colonel barked at Jamie: "Consider yourself under arrest." Jamie saluted and went off to find his squadron. They were in a ditch eating sandwiches.

The attack was continued and carried through successfully, and not a bluebell in the wood was left standing.

Three days later Jamie received a notice to attend a court-martial at three o'clock in the afternoon. He was unable to attend for he was very busy at the bank, but the Colonel was not to be balked of his revenge. The regiment was paraded in its drill hall, and Sergeant Lawrie had the stripes removed from his arm and was degraded to the ranks. He paid the fine prescribed for resignation with its breach of the oath to save the Queen's Majesty and the 3rd V.B.T.R. knew him no more. The Colonel of that famous regiment was Mr. Enoch Moon, butter merchant, City Councillor, Justice of the Peace and father of one Joseph Moon, who was in

Cateaton's Bank, a year or two junior to Jamie, who, not liking his looks, had always ignored him and hardly knew he existed until soon after the event just recorded. Cateaton's had opened a new branch in Tib Street to catch the coal trade, for Cateaton's, *i.e.*, the cherubic Rigby Blair, was fully alive to the change going on in Thrigsby and knew that it could no longer expect its prestige alone to compel extension of business but must be aided with an effort to create it. The new branch was opened and Jamie was offered the managership of it, but he refused, partly because he was afraid of the responsibility, partly because he thought it more to his interest to stay in the head office. He was rather anxious about the turn things were taking and thought he could watch them better where he was. The position in Tib Street was offered to and accepted by Mr. Joseph Moon, who found when he was installed that his only approach in the ordinary way of business to Mr. Blair lay through Jamie. He made himself amiable, but the more polite he was the more did Jamie detest him. The fellow had a skin like a buffalo's and when he got married invited Jamie to his wedding, where Mr. Enoch Moon fussily and pompously regretted the loss to his regiment.—"No one," he said, "could be more sorry than I, but discipline is discipline, and one can't allow a subordinate to explain, can one? I like discipline in my business and I wish there were more of it. A hive of industry, you know, Mr. Lawrie. Bees have their discipline."—"Yes," replied Jamie, "they teach the act of order to a peopled kingdom."—"Shakespeare, you know, father," said Joseph, "Mr. Lawrie is Quintus Flumen."—"Well, sir, well," puffed Mr. Enoch. "You were a fine soldier, and the Queen will miss you if the hour should ever come."—"I should like to explain," said Jamie, "now that I am

no longer a subordinate, that I had saved the boy from drowning. Had it been a real battle no doubt I should have let him drown, but as it was I thought it better to use my discretion."—"Well, sir, well," replied Mr. Enoch. "I wish you'd said so before. Just a note would have put the whole affair straight."—"I hardly thought it worth mentioning. The court-martial was quite exciting, wasn't it?" Jamie turned to greet an acquaintance, and Mr. Enoch whose skin was not so thick as Joseph's was left fuming. The fellow might have spread his version of the affair and then he would look a fool, by Jove he would.

As a matter of fact Jamie had given no further thought to the matter. He had been made happy with dreams rising out of the vision of the child in the bluebell wood and he had sought her out in Greenhill Lane. Her father was a packer and they lived in one of fourteen stucco houses which had once been genteel but were now sunk to being inhabited by Mr. Shaw and his kind, whose wives let rooms to lodgers, the general expedient for solving the problem of having money for both drink and the rent on Saturdays. Neither hill nor green were in the lane which led in its windings from a brewery to a public-house, or if you were walking the other way from the public-house to the brewery. But when Jamie walked either way with Fanny he felt that it led to paradise. The child loved him and was entirely happy with him; he loved her but with her he was not altogether happy, for he felt, as she did not, the misery of her surroundings. Her father was a coarse jovial man who had married young and worked regularly because his wife bore him a child every eighteen months. Mrs. Shaw was a thin pale woman, untidy, heedless, romantic, absorbed like an animal in her baby. As soon as each

child could talk and walk and hold food in its hands she had no more interest in it, for there was another one coming; but frail as she looked, she did her own baking and washing once a week, and she looked after the lodger, because, if she did not, both ends would not meet on Saturday and she would be forced to run through her husband's pockets and have him, as likely as not, refusing to come home on Saturdays.

Fanny was nurse, peace-maker, cook, charwoman and did anything and everything except clean the steps. There she drew the line. There were professional step-cleaners, girls who were too independent to work in the factories or had quarrelled with their parents, or got into trouble, and went from house to house in the unservanted region of Thrigsby and offered to clean the steps for twopence. Mrs. Shaw, who recognised that her daughter's pride was at stake, would always have twopence to spare.

The most astonishing thing about Fanny was her cleanliness. She could not manage to keep the house clean with the children and her mother always making a litter in it, but her clothes were spotless, her red hair shone, her white skin was never grimy. Her mother used to tease her about it and her father used to say: "It's a gift. That's what it is. It's a gift." She was a great joke to both of them. "Old-fashioned" they called her and when she came home with a story of how she had seen a battle and one of the soldiers had been taken away and shot, they told her that the war was in Russia and over long ago and they said to each other that she must have heard the neighbours talking. It was one of her "fancies." As they never believed what she said she very rarely told them the truth and had suppressed the facts about her brother falling into the pond, for

she was afraid that she would be forbidden ever to go to the bluebell wood again.

She did not recognise Jamie out of his uniform when he accosted her in the street. And when he told her who he was and asked her to take him home to see her mother she was frightened lest he should let the cat out of the bag. However she was soon at her ease with him and asked him not to say a word about the bluebell wood, because "they" knew nothing of it. "They" were used to Fanny's acquaintances, for she was a child who was often accosted in the street and painters had asked her to sit for them. Her father said he had often seen Mr. Lawrie at the theatre where he had a friend who played the cornet in the orchestra. Feeling that something good might come of the distinguished-looking gentleman, they allowed the friendship and once a week at least Jamie had Fanny to himself. He taught her to read and write. She could sing prettily and he got Mr. Wilcox to teach her elocution and gesture, for he was anxious for her to leave the life in which she had been brought up and could think of no better career than the stage. At first her mother would not hear of it but after a year of coaxing and under the pressure of weeks of hardship during an illness of her husband's she consented, and Fanny made her first appearance as Mustardseed in the *Midsummer-Night's Dream.*

CHAPTER XXV

TOM AND AGNES

THE performance of the *Midsummer-Night's Dream* was one of the most successful in the repertory of the stock company, and Jamie delighted in it, especially in Mr. Wilcox as Bottom and Mr. J. Coates as Oberon. Mr. Coates had a tenor voice and sang "I know a bank whereon the wild thyme blows," so that the audience gasped with pleasure and astonishment. Of his singing Jamie wrote: "He roars like an organ. Never was the theatre so full of sound. He soars so upon his voice that it seems he can never come down again. Come down again, however, he does, and the play goes on; and what a play, and what an England it must have been that produced it!"—He used often to take Fanny home at night and it was very grim to go from Shakespeare's Warwickshire to the squalor which was fast descending upon Thrigsby. He could feel it closing in upon himself: no one else seemed to mind. Tom had things all his own way at Keiths' now and was satisfied: and Margaret shared Tom's satisfaction. She could hardly be got to move from Thrigsby and would not hear of visiting Scotland. Occasionally she would stay with the Greigs for the sake of seeing her daughter. She had set her heart on reconciling her two sons, so that Jamie could be taken back into the firm and so redeem the years

he had wasted at the bank. She would often broach the subject with Tom, who would say: "Now, mother, mother, don't meddle in business. I cannot have my own brother in my employ. It would never do. If Jamie has money and cares to put it into the business that is a different matter."—"But he has ability."—"He chooses to waste it on the play-house and the writing. That is his affair. There's plenty of ability in the firm. We must all suffer for our mistakes and he made the mistake of annoying Uncle Andrew. If he stays where he is he may step into Mr. Blair's shoes. That's all the hope there is for him. I hope I'm not wanting in affection for my own brother but business is business. He knows that as well as I do and doesn't expect anything of the kind. Besides he is quite happy as he is."—Said Margaret:—"I am not so sure of that and what I want to see is the two of you working together, married, with children, so that the Lawries may be one of the best-known families in Thrigsby."—Tom liked that and purred to himself.—"There'll be time for that presently," he said. "All in good time. You'd have us the Royal Family, if you could have your way, mother."—"Indeed," answered she, "if I had my way I would not change places with the Queen."

When she sounded Jamie she found him annoyingly contented with his place in the bank. He would smile at her and say: "When I'm manager of Cateaton's even Tom will have to take his hat off to me. He's after money, like all the rest. Well—I shall be the shining symbol of money."—"It isn't money," said Margaret.—"What is it, then? Why else are nine-tenths of the people in this place sunk in poverty?"—"There is no shame in poverty."—"By God," said Jamie, "that is just what I think there is." Then Margaret would throw

up her hands in despair of ever understanding this recalcitrant son of hers.—"What do you want me to be?" he would ask. "Like the Greigs?" She would clutch at that: "Yes. Like the Greigs."—"Making a religion of their houses?"—"Oh! Jamie, if you would not be so satirical! I want you to fear God, of course, and keep his commandments."—"In a bank of all places!"—"Then leave the bank, and put your savings into Tom's business."—"And fear God, with Tom? No, mother. You must realise that Tom's way and my way are not the same."—He thought, but did not say, that Tom's way led as far from God as it was possible to go.—"But, Jamie," she said, "I don't know what you want. You are so long in showing any signs of settling down. You never tell me anything of yourself. I live in dread of your growing into a Hubert."—"To tell you the truth, mother, I don't think I know myself. The only person with whom I would change shoes is Mary. Meanwhile I consider myself lucky to be where I am with work enough and amusement enough and friends enough. If I can work and have my friends I don't think I want anything more. I'd prefer to do work of my own choosing but I can't have that and I'll do that which I have to do as well as I can."—"I wish you could have more ambition."—"My ambition," said Jamie fiercely, "is to destroy Thrigsby and all its works. It is a disease, a foul blot on the world; its aims are mean and its deeds are wicked. It is to-day what England will be to-morrow. That's true and God help England."—"I forbid you to talk to me like that," said Margaret; "you should at least keep that for your abominable friends." —"I'm sorry," said he. "I'm sorry. I couldn't help saying what I felt; and I do feel that very strongly. I can't forget. I can't forget the beauty in which I was

brought up. One wants—I want—so little else. Just beauty, and, if it comes, love. I don't want to be richer than my neighbour. I don't want him to be envious of me. If he cannot be my friend, let him ignore me. There is room for both of us. Oh! there is room for all of us if we would not so crowd each other in."—"I never thought," said Margaret, "that you could be so wicked. It has been a great grief to me."—"Oh! I am sorry," cried he, between laughter and tears. "I am sorry, but what I say and what I do are very different things—the more's the pity. Dear mother, I am sorry. But do—do let us keep our old affection. That, at least, is not altered by what I say or what I do."—And Margaret melted. She caressed him and said: "I am only so afraid that you are unhappy."—She was glad to have him so, like a child come to her with his hurt, though he could not make her understand the nature of it. None of her children had ever before made her forget that they were grown men and women. She was thankful, deeply, for the irruption, though it did finally depose Jamie from the headship of the family and in a way expelled him from it. He and she were no longer mother and son, but fellow human beings divided and joined by their consciousness of human tragedy, in him acute and near bursting through the surface, in her remote, dim, only felt through her profoundest instinct. Both were shaken and exhausted by the experience through which they had passed: his brain began to work on it: she with a wan smile sank back into her life of habit, giving up hope of ever bringing him into it.—"Well," she said, wiping her eyes, "whatever happens, I know it will be for the best."—"That's right," he replied, "and let well alone."

He was left reeling. He had thought his crisis over

long ago, had not looked for its coming to a head so suddenly, and he saw with a horrible clearness how ill equipped he was to deal with the ruin of himself left by it. He had thought that as he grew older, life would become simpler. There would be an end of confusion: the queer elements of existence would take shape and order: dissatisfaction would disappear: things as they were would seem justified and such as they were, he, such as he was, would take his place among them. But now everything was denied: the folly of his life was revealed to him: all his desire was gone to dust and he had no hope, nothing at all but the grim knowledge of the tragedy of human life. Even that was vague, only, appallingly, human life had dwindled to cognisable size, and all the humming business, the hurry, the jostling and the scramble of the great city seemed insignificant, idiotic, absolutely without dignity. Only in Margaret, in his mother, was there dignity, the quality that could redeem everything, an austerity that could withstand the pressure of the external world, a rock upon which the waves of phenomena could break, break into beauty. It was something to have known it in her. It was worth any torture, any misery the world might have in store for him. His own egoism was broken by it: no other egoism mattered. The Lawriean principle with which he had once liked to amuse himself became full of meaning now.—In the end he laughed. That was quite enough for one day. Directly he had a clear idea he perceived that he lost interest. He saw that ideas only became clear after they had lost their potency for action. That alone was important: action, instead of the fatuous, ego-driven, restless activity which more and more was becoming the rule among those with whom he lived and worked.

For some weeks he took refuge with the poets and devoted all his spare time to reading. Poetry seemed to him the noblest kind of action. If he could have been a poet! But that was ruined in him by his early shyness, by the fatuous conceit in which he had taken refuge from it. He saw how poetry died directly the ideas behind it became clear and were wrested by the intelligence or the heated and overwrought mind from the profoundest understanding in which alone they were truly apprehended, so that they could be wrought upon and molten together to give out their energy. He was comforted and it amused him as he went about his daily business at the bank, in the office of *The Weekly Post,* at the theatre, giving Fanny her lessons on a Saturday—it amused him to wonder how many of those he met could have any idea of the trials through which he was passing. He even felt physically exalted. Could they see any difference in his carriage, in his eyes, on his lips? He had a strange feeling that his lips were more sensitive and he found himself speaking with greater ease, more aptly, and with a keen pleasure in pronouncing words.

Tibby became very attentive to him. She took more care over his food and his clothes: he would find her waiting to open the door for him when he came home in the evening: he would meet her on the stairs, or just outside his door if he had been sitting in his room. She was thinner and uglier than ever and her shadowing irritated him. His mind was full of the grace and charm of little Fanny, who had responded, like no one else, to the change in him. She had become eager to learn, even with the tasks that had once been most distasteful to her. Teaching her was a joy that made every other task, every other encounter delightful. In town Jamie found himself popular where before men had complained of his

damned reserve. Even Tom unbent so far as to ask him if he ever thought of leaving the bank and how much money he had saved. He shut up like an oyster when Jamie said he had only seven hundred pounds. Jamie laughed and said: "I'm sorry I'm such a failure, but I can't help spending my income and more." Tom answered: "It has been and always will be my rule never to spend more than a third of my income. That is why I have postponed marriage. I could not allow marriage to break my rule."—"If I made a rule," said Jamie, "I should be afraid of its breaking my marriage."—"I suppose that's witty," sneered Tom. "I'm always hearing of good things you are supposed to have said. I will make a note of that."

When the time came for Jamie's holidays that year his mother astonished him by proposing that he should spend them with her at the Greigs'.—(As a rule Tom took her to Whitby or Llandudno.)—Now Jamie had planned that he would take Fanny and her mother away to the country, some remote rich valley with wide meadows and a tranquil stream, orchards and woods, some blessed place where the bounty of Nature could induce drowsy contentment and a full humour. He could not refuse his mother and he did not wish to disappoint Fanny., Would she mind going away without him? She could take her mum with her, and her mum could take the baby and he would come at the end of the time. Fanny wept but consented at last, and it ended in her whole family, including her father, going with her, while Jamie went with his mother to stay with the Donald Greigs.

Maggie greeted her brother warmly: "You know," she said, "mother's letters are full of you, nowadays. It used to be all Tom, Tom, Tom—this, that, and the

other. But now it is Jamie this and Jamie that and Jamie says——"—"She's given me up as a bad job," replied he.—"Oh, no," said Maggie, "she says you are a great comfort to her and that banking is a most useful profession. She wrote to Mrs. Donald the other day saying that they had all been most unjust to you."—Jamie clapped his sister on the shoulder. He felt sorry for her. She looked already disappointed, a little wizened and worn. Being companion to Mrs. Donald was a difficult position and she had no hope of anything else. He said to her:—"If Tom doesn't marry soon I'll take a house and you shall come and keep it for me. Mother can't have both of us to stay with her for ever."—"I think I must stay where I am. They're used to me now. And I like being where there aren't many people. Besides, I am happy. The vicar here is a most interesting man and lends me German magazines. He has been a missionary in China and has written some translations of Chinese poems." Pathetic was Maggie's insistence on her contentment. She seemed to her brother a broken creature.

He said that to Agnes whom in the evening of the second day of his visit he took out on the lake in the family boat, a great heavy tub. The rest of the house-party had gone for an excursion, the young people walking over the fells, the elders driving. He was so enjoying the solitude and peace of the place that he had excused himself: and Agnes had only that day returned from a visit:—"We are all so fond of her," said she, "and so sorry for her. She would have been so pretty: but she is so shy. She expects pity and pity seems to hurt her."—"I love to hear you say that," he answered. "It assures me that I haven't made a fool of myself."—"How?" asked she.—"By setting you up on a pedestal."

—"You shouldn't have done that, Jamie."—"In the beginning I was afraid of you, as I used to be afraid of every beautiful thing. I could never trust myself with it. I could never trust myself, for instance, with the idea that I loved you."—It was almost dark now. Dark shone the lake, reflecting far down, beyond the shadow of the mountain, the yellow sky. There were no stars yet, and the mist hung in wisps above the water. The boat glided along, the oars dipping, rattling in the rowlocks and dragging a silvery trickle over the water. Agnes hung her head and folded her hands in her lap. The boat glided on for many moments. At last Jamie said: "I can trust myself with it now, Agnes—Agnes."—"Oh! Jamie," she said, with a new deep note of sadness in her voice, and he leaned forward to catch what she would say. "Oh! Jamie, you talk as though life were poetry." And, sadly, she seemed to be laughing at him.—"What else is it?" he asked. "In such a place as this, on such a night. I tell you now that I love you, and it is almost enough to tell you so."—"There is more in love than the telling of it," said she and that brought him out of the ecstasy in which he had been floating.—"By God! there is," cried he, "and that's where I've been a fool, where I've let it slip by me all these years."—She had no need to say more. He knew that this thing also had escaped him, that he must enter upon the new phase of his life for which he had been so eager without love.—"I at least do not wish you to be sorry for me," he said. She made no answer. They were a couple of miles from home. He dropped the oars into the water and sent the boat spinning along. The stars came out and in the water they shone and danced in the ripples and eddies left behind the boat.—"I wish," said he, "I wish I could tell one note from another. I'd sing." And Agnes sang

the ballad of the *Two Sisters of Binnorie—Johnston and Stirling stand on the Tay.*—"I like the skirl of that," said Jamie.—"You are very Scots," said she, "and most like my grandfather of any of them. To-night and that other night when you talked to me first will always be with me."—"It may be too late for me to love you," said Jamie, "but I've had the telling of it, and that was the pleasure poor Burns could never resist." He gave a chuckle. "You'd never think," he added, "that a romantical man like myself was a bank clerk." And Agnes laughed too and so, in laughter, they hid the soreness in their hearts.—"It was a week ago," she said, "that I promised to marry Tom."—"Tom!" All the laughter in Jamie died away, his heart ached and his throat was full. Tom and Agnes! That was laughable but grim! That beauty in Tom's hands! He was filled with rage. This was to make a jack-fool of him. "You should have told me that, at once," he cried.—"We arranged to tell no one, for a while."—"Why not?"—"They—my father——"

They had reached the landing-stage and there, a huge, looming figure, stood Tom.—"I hope you are well wrapped up, Agnes," said he. Jamie ran the nose of the boat into the bank, leaped out and fled. Tom! Sly, persistent, obstinate Tom, and Agnes.—"It's a defiance of Nature," said Jamie to himself as he went floundering through the shrubbery, and as he was still under the delusion that Nature was extremly like Agnes he was soon lost in a pretty confusion of thought. Agnes betraying Nature was betraying herself. Tom was not guilty of that treachery. It was Tom's way to get what he wanted, but Agnes, Agnes of the lake, ought to have known better.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE STRUGGLE WITH VANITY

IT took Jamie three days to realise that he and not Tom was the intruder, and he only arrived at that result after much thought and real suffering. In the first place, so vain is the male of the human species, it was mortifying that he should have desired a woman who could give a moment's consideration to Tom. That lasted hardly any time at all: he was forced to allow Agnes a point of view and then, by the illumination it brought, he was forced to see that he ought to have done this years ago. Only he was quite sure that Tom did not allow her any such thing. To hold "his female in due awe" was Tom's philosophy: to stand between her and God, and dispense divine favours, as children, a dress allowance and occasional pleasures. Jamie was quite certain of that though he and his brother had never discussed the matter or any subject germane to it. He knew it was so because it had also been his own youthful idea: it had been Andrew's plan: and even in Hubert there had been traces of such despotism. Why not? Women acquiesced in it. Oh, but it was wrong that Agnes should so acquiesce. Such beauty should be served, not commanded. That certainly he had done, without effect. He had made no impression, had been so wonderfully dull that Tom, crashing through the difficulties put in

his way, had been by comparison, exciting.—What then was Agnes' point of view? Being a healthy young woman, she would naturally wish to be married: but, being Agnes, that was not so very certain either. To be married would be for her to be dragged from the remoteness which she had always enjoyed. She was intelligent but of a temper only to understand things at a distance. (Jamie thought she was like himself in that.) There was some truth there, and yet that did not explain Tom. He tried from Tom's point of view. Admitting to himself that Agnes had been to him a symbol of beauty, that she was to a certain extent in herself a symbol (a most unsatisfactory thing for a human being to be)—he wondered what on earth Tom could see in her. A prettier woman should have been his choice: a pleasant ornament for the dinner-table. Then he pitched on a theory that helped: Tom desired nothing except through his ambitions: Agnes would stand in his eyes for success: to win her would be to set the crown on a triumphant youth, to pull the Lawries up to the level of the Greigs. That Agnes had a considerable fortune was incidental. The chief thing for Tom was not that she was Agnes but that she was a Greig. Most unsatisfying for her; but here Jamie had to concede that his own realisation of her had hardly been more adequate. He had perhaps adored most of all her remoteness and had longed to share it and this under no circumstances would she allow. She prized it: Tom would never intrude upon it. He would fuss over her body and her physical health: her spirit he would ignore entirely. That would suit her, and then she must desire a change of view. She had hinted more than once at dissatisfaction with the Greigs: she had seen from her remoteness all that there was to be seen in them, and

who could be more amusing than Tom when seen with sufficient detachment?

Painful and yet pleasant was the working out of this intellectual problem. Not for a moment could Jamie allow that the betrothed couple might be after their fashion in love with each other. They were certainly not in love as he was whenever he entered in any degree upon that delicious state, but he was forced to acknowledge that between the two as factors in his problem and then as he saw them daily in the flesh—(for Tom had arrived to stay and to seize the moment for the forcing of his betrothal upon the Greigs)—there was a horrid discrepancy which he filled conceitedly with a wicked scepticism. He saw more malice in Agnes than in fact there was; and in his brother he perceived only the fatuous arriviste achieveing that at which he had aimed. For this vain folly Jamie paid handsomely in misery, and his love for Agnes came perilously near breaking through from his head to his heart, would have done so indeed, and brought him thus early in life to tragedy, but for that sure shield and defence of the heart, Vanity.

He achieved a new popularity with the Greigs, who like the other branches of the clan prided themselves on their intellect, and were confident that the superiority which they collectively enjoyed would one day bring forth a being of true as opposed to mere commercial eminence. In his youth Hubert was to have been such a being, but Andrew's wife destroyed that hope, wherein for the Greigs lay her deepest wickedness.—Now Jamie's fame as Quintus Flumen had just reached the dale inhabited by the Greigs: and this, aided by his mother's *volte-face* towards him, made them lend him their ears. He was encouraged to hold forth, and, being plied with Donald's admirable port, had no difficulty in doing so in

the evenings. Besides he wished to outshine Tom, who could always hold Donald's attention about business, prices, grey cloth, the Far East, the possibility of America doing its own manufacturing. The theatre as a topic was impossible for the Greigs never went to the theatre; poetry served for a night or two, because a Greig had married a kinswoman of the Ettrick Shepherd, and old Angus had once been taken to dine with Samuel Rogers, and Christopher North had more than once attended the great Greig garden-party at which all the county gathered; but the subject could not last long because no one knew anything of Wordsworth except his grave, and Keats, Shelley and Byron had announced ideals upon which Thrigsby had improved in practice. It was, curiously enough, when the *Vestiges of Creation* cropped up that Jamie was able to expound and defend the poetical attitude. Then he talked with an excited confidence, keeping clear of denunciation and fortunately offending no one, but saying many things that unknown to himself had been lying next his heart. His luck stood by him and he drew most largely upon Spenser and ended to the admiration of all by reciting whole passages by heart. The Greigs were happy and exalted. Here was one of those young Lawries proving himself on lines which threatened no Greig preserve. He would be a poet, he would be famous. They could point to him and say: Not only have the Greigs and the Keiths made Thrigsby but they have given to the world a voice. Poor Jamie got far more drunk on Donald's praise than upon Donald's port, and he allowed these relations of his night after night to make a show of him until he realised that Agnes' eyes were upon him and that from her remoteness she was extracting her fill of amusement out of him. He became horribly aware too that his mother was suck-

ing up their flattery and actually allowing the Greigs to put the Lawries in their place. It was enough for the Lawries to have produced this marvel, this poet; they need look for no more: when the poet had conquered, when his works were published in London, they would have justified themselves. The Lawries were placed, by these Greigs who had done all that they had by this same process of allowing strangers to approach just so far as to be useful and no further. Jamie saw that in one flash of insight: he understood the whole household: he understood Agnes too, and saw that she, being in reaction against it, might well be, though never so little, in love with his brother. Ever so little would suffice: she would be so glad to be simply and womanly in love. It was almost worth having made a fool of himself to have arrived at that, but about himself the Greig process had begun and there was no stopping it. It would grind the Lawrian principle to powder. Only flight could save him, but there was no moving his mother. She was so entirely happy in Donald's flattery and had begun to vow that Jamie was the image of his father.—"It is time," said Donald, "that Thrigsby gave the country something more than wealth and commercial and political ideas. When we produce artists, poets, thinkers, then the modern English city will rival Florence. I have always felt myself that we were on the eve of a Renaissance. Great wealth, great luxury, and then, art. Out of mortality, immortality." Donald was not often given to talking because he knew that he could so easily talk himself off his balance. This happened to him now and he went on talking. He dreaded the moment when his habitual silence would return. Everybody else dreaded it for him and the atmosphere was highly charged. Jamie withdrew himself, profiting by his new

license as a poet to take long walks all day, going over to visit Wordsworth's grave and his cottage, hunting out that which Coleridge had occupied, partly out of genuine love for these men, partly in the pathetic attempt to persuade himself that he was indeed a poet. And with great labour he managed to screw a few miserable verses out of himself, but they were so lame that he shouted with laughter over them, and went back to Spenser to console himself. After all, when things like that had been written, only the most bitter compulsion could justify a man in writing more, unless he were to have Coleridge's luck and dream a poem, one terrific line like: "Ancestral voices prophesying war." Ancestral voices! What a description of Donald droning on, droning on and on until a whole world should rise in war to put a stop to it.

Not a whole world rose, but Tom did. He was alarmed for the Lawrican principle, scented danger, though he was never so near as Jamie to knowing what was happening. He sniffed danger, detected the shadow of this new mythical Jamie over his ambitions, and chose the most obvious way of asserting himself, of announcing that Agnes had promised to marry him. That was his instinctive process of which he knew nothing. He imagined that the Greigs were pleased with his family generally. Mrs. Donald was making herself particularly charming to Margaret. He selected Mrs. Donald as the person to whom first to confide the tale of the success which had rewarded his persistence. She said: "Agnes!" He repeated: "Yes, Agnes." "Agnes?" He was never very patient and he said: "We can't go on saying 'Agnes' indefinitely." Mrs. Donald ignored his bluntness and said: "I never thought of such a thing." The good creature never thought of anything:

Donald did all her thinking for her, and as she now had to think she went straight to him and told him.

That stopped his talking. He clapped his hat on his head and went over to see his brother, Agnes' father, Matthew Greig, who, wearying in middle life of business and Thrigsby, had tried many hobbies and in the end had found being an invalid more interesting than any other. To him Agnes had been for years a ministering angel. Part of her immense credit with the Greigs was due to her unselfishness with regard to her father, who was more than happy to simmer in the satisfaction of their perfect relationship. Donald's news acted upon him like salt upon a snail. He shrivelled up and then with a violent effort asserted himself, forgot his illness and roared—"Marry? Agnes marry Tom Lawrie, that butcher's son!"—"Grandson," said Donald—"All the same. It's in the blood. Anyone, anyone but Agnes."

Even to her own relations, it is to be observed, Agnes was a symbol. To the Greigs she stood for perfect Greigishness, all that they considered themselves to have achieved in emerging from the industrialism they had so successfully exploited: a kind of virginity, a superhuman and collective chastity. To the Greigs their family was their church, their religion, and Tom's designs upon Agnes were a violation. If she married Tom she would be dragged back into Thrigsby; she would become the totem of a base tribe.

Matthew rang the bell and sent for his daughter. She came and received expostulation in silence, with Donald grunting approval of his brother's protests and entreaties. Agnes felt more than ever remote, and she was wonderfully amused. These two senior Greigs quite perfectly and dramatically expressed all that had for years entertained her until she was weary of it. It was a magnifi-

cent climax and must be the end: but, because she was fond of the two old gentlemen, she was sorry.—"But suddenly," said Matthew, "suddenly to let such news burst upon us. One thought you did not marry because you were fastidious, and had your full share of the family pride. You might have married almost anybody. You had your seasons in London, but you seemed to despise London."—"Yes, papa," said Agnes, "we do."—"Then why Thrigsby? For you will have to live in Thrigsby."—"Our money comes from there."—"Aye," interjected Donald, "but our brains come from Scotland."—"Then," said Agnes, "we should live in Scotland."—"Do keep to the point," cried Matthew.—"Yes, please," said Agnes, knowing that this was the one thing no Greig could ever do. Matthew and Donald went on talking round and round the subject until she told them that Tom had been asking her for the last four years until at last she had consented.—"At least," asked Matthew, "will you wait?"—"No," replied she, "Tom has waited all those years."—"Do him no harm to wait a little longer."—"At least," said Matthew suddenly sentimental, "at least I hoped you would wait for my death."—This baffled even Agnes, accustomed as she was to her father's unscrupulous egoism. It stiffened her in her resistance; made her feel that it was quite time she escaped.—"I will tell Tom to come and see you," she said.—"I will not see him," almost whined Matthew.—"Uncle Donald then."—"Someone," said Donald, "must look into his finances."—"That," said Agnes maliciously, "is all Tom wants." And then, without warning, a little storm of emotion broke upon her and tears came to her eyes.—"Oh!" she cried, "if only you would for one moment think of me."—Donald drew himself up and

with immense dignity he said: "In every crisis we must think of the family."

On that basis Donald conducted his interview with Tom, whose finances were found to be eminently satisfactory. He was given to understand that the Greigs refused to admit that Agnes would pass out of the family or immediately to suffer his entrance to it. Opposition, in a word, was not withdrawn though its futility was acknowledged.

Over the negotiations the way was opened up for the beginning of a *rapprochement* between the House of Keith and the House of Greig which had for forty years been separated ever since a quarrel between old Andrew and old Angus. Tom was satisfied. Jamie was eclipsed. As for Margaret she was in the farthest heaven of delight. Agnes Greig, that fine flower of the family, was to be Agnes Lawrie; all that she had suffered from her descent from her own family was healed in this triumph. She was free as never before to rejoice in her sons, most of all now in Tom, tentatively and hopefully in Jamie, and only in John was she now disappointed. It seemed to her a confession of weakness in him that he should have gone away to the Colonies. A glorious victory! Her tongue was loosed. She sought Jamie's company and began to tell him of all she had suffered from the time when she had been left to bring them all up on her pension, until now—now—when Tom's fortune was made. "And, dear Jamie, I am so happy now that I can talk to you. Dear Tom is so absorbed, so taken up with his Agnes. And I am so glad that it is Tom and not you who are going to be married, for I can look forward to being alone with you. And if Tom could now make room for you in the firm——"—"I'll stick to my bank," said Jamie and he let her go crooning on. Of all the

persons engaged she was the most truly happy. In vain did he look in Tom and Agnes for the enchanted wonder that should be in lovers. When he saw them together he was reminded of the good people coming out of church in Thrigsby: gentlemen in stiff broadcloth, ladies in crinoline—a marriage, he thought, between a frock-coat and a crinoline. And when he remembered the dreams of Agnes that for years had hovered in his mind, then he was sad indeed. He shared rather the depression of the Greigs than the elation of his own family, and, indeed, he too had been defeated. And so listless was his vanity that his heart was left unprotected, and a little, a very little, of his love for Agnes found its way into it and made him very wretched. He was glad when, the wedding having been fixed, his mother withdrew triumphant from the field and he could return with her to Thrigsby. This time he was glad to see the city, to take up his career there, and to feel that, for good or ill, he had to work out his share of the clan's history in the ugliness the clan had helped to make. Ah! if he could bring some little beauty into it, if his miserable love for Agnes could come to flower there and do some service in redemption!

CHAPTER XXVII

AMBITION

IT was about this time that Jamie became aware that everything, when he looked back on it, showed comic. Also that he had reached an alarming stage in his life when retrospection became imperative. The most obvious way out of this unpleasant state was to stop thinking, but when he stopped thinking he began to feel suffocated. To that he preferred the painful comicality of things. At least that did leave him with the power to take a human interest in those with whom he had to live. If he stopped thinking, that was denied him, and as the bank was becoming more and more mechanical and business less and less a matter of personal relationships, he clung to that with all his might, and here Fanny was so powerful an aid that he was immensely, almost absurdly, grateful to her. She made him feel so sure of himself, so wonderfully did she respond to the will to understand in him. And when he failed to understand, he was more hurt than she because only he was aware of his failure. He was wonderful in her eyes. To all others she existed for better or worse; they were easy-going, happy-go-lucky, at worst querulous, and everything that he delighted in they called old-fashioned. She was absolutely without reservations, and yet there was in her no trace of the precocious sharpness of so

many of the clever children of Thrigsby's mean streets. So acute was his pleasure in her that he wished to share it and he took her to tea with Tibby, who was immediately her slave.—"Child, child," said Tibby, "you're a fairy indeed, out of the play-acting."—"I'm so glad Mr. Lawrie isn't really a soldier," prattled Fanny. "At first of all I thought he was just a soldier and I didn't recognise him when he was plain Mr. Lawrie."—"Ah! He's a grand man," sighed Tibby.—(Jamie had left them together.)—"Mr. Wilcox says he would have been a great actor."—"God forbid!" said Tibby.—"Why?" asked Fanny. "I'm an actress."—"You, child, an actress? Actresses are hussies. He's a grand man is Mr. Lawrie, and he goes among the actresses to relieve his feelings, and, let me tell you, there's not many has such feelings to relieve. If we were in Scotland now they would make him a minister or a professor. He would be looked up to anywhere."—"Yes," said Fanny, "he's so tall; but he doesn't like being looked up to. He looks quite unhappy if I even tell him what they say about him at the theatre."

Jamie returned and teased Fanny because she had made so great a hole in the cake.—"You like our Scots cooking?" he asked. "Next time you come we'll have scones and honey. You can take what is left of the cake home to your mother." Fanny beamed at that.—"O, mum will like that; she'll be so proud, but I don't think she'll eat any of it. She'll want to keep it in her treasure drawer."—"Then you sha'n't take it," said Tibby. "I made the cake to be eaten."—"If you cut it in slices," said Fanny thoughtfully, "I think she wouldn't keep it. Six slices, one for each, and a big one for dad."

Jamie was just cutting the cake when Margaret came down into the kitchen to see Tibby. She was taken

aback to see the child sitting at the table.—"My friend, Fanny Shaw," said Jamie. "Fanny, this is my mother." The child dropped to her feet and bobbed a curtsey, and Margaret bowed gravely. She was overcome with shyness and Fanny was at once alarmed, disappointed too for the mother of her wonderful friend should have been wonderful also. Margaret seemed to be very much the fine lady, made more awful by the mutch she was wearing.—"Tibby," said Margaret, "Miss Agnes is coming to stay a night or two with us and you must air the best linen sheets."—Jamie winced at the mention of Agnes, and that did not escape Fanny's sharp eyes and keen instincts. Her perturbation communicated itself to Tibby who turned her mournful eyes upon Jamie.—"Fanny is my best friend," said he. "We were cutting up the cake for the family."—"We don't often have cake," said Fanny.—Margaret smiled uneasily and with the best intentions of saying the right thing remarked: "I'm sure you are a good little girl."—That "little girl" finished the party. Jamie relapsed into a gloomy silence and Tibby began to talk about the linen sheets, while she made a rough parcel of the cake. With this presently Jamie and Fanny sallied forth, he unable to say a word. She was used to that mood in him and had learned that it was best to talk through it. She rattled on: "Tibby looks like a witch, doesn't she? I was frightened of her at first, but she isn't a bit like a witch really. And when she talked about you I was quite happy again. I often wondered what grown-up people's mothers were like and when she talked about Agnes——"—"For God's sake, child," said Jamie, "be quiet."—Poor Fanny's lips trembled. He had never spoken to her like that before. Who was this Agnes who could cast so dark a shadow?

They had to go up to the theatre for Fanny was playing the infant child in a melodrama. It was a relief to Jamie when they entered the stage door and passed into the queer remote life of the place, detached and concentrated, fantastic and full of excitement. It drugged his nerves and soothed his soreness. He took Fanny to her dressing-room, promised to take her home after the performance and then sought out Mr. Wilcox.

He found that worthy in the depths of gloom. "Doing shocking business," he said, "and there's talk of a change of management. Change of management? Change of audience is what we want. Not a soul in the place but a few queer fish like you care a hang about it. Drama! What do they care about drama? Bosoms and legs, that's what they want, bosoms and legs. No, sir, London's the only place, but they tell me I've got an accent." This was so apparent that Jamie could not controvert it and, to turn the conversation, he said: "Ever hear of Selina now?" "Oh yes," replied Wilcox, "she writes every now and then. She's had a hard time and sends her love to you. Henry's had two or three parts, but the critics have been cruel hard on him and Selina's had to go into a legs and bosom show. Legs and bosoms! Ah! There are times when I could wish myself back in the office: after all I was someone as an amateur, but this is a dog's life, nothing but a public vomit. I tell you, Quint, if it wasn't for you bucking us up in print week after week many of us couldn't go on." "Then I'm doing some good," said Jamie. "Indeed you are. I tell you I'm often kept alive by the pleasure of being elated by you. You *see*, you know, and one feels that there is one man in all this place who cares." "I'm glad to hear you say that, for I was thinking of giving it up. It's quite time I made up my mind

what I am going to be, and, you know, my family never liked it, and there's no getting away from the fact that it does pull away from the bank."—"Pull?" cried Mr. Wilcox. "It pulls away from everything. It cleans you out. Why, the saints aren't in it! They give up everything for the sake of peace, but we give up everything for the sake of trouble."—"I often think," said Jamie, "of that room in Keith's. You and Peter Leslie. Everything seems to have been settled then."—"I don't think there was much choice about it. You were one of us at once. But let's have a drink on it. I want cheering up." So they drank beer and Mr. Wilcox, becoming more hopeful, elaborated plans for an autumn Shakespearean season. Could Jamie find the money? Jamie promised that he would see what could be done. He was thinking of Fanny and wanting to keep her where she was, always within reach, and out of her mother's way and free of any danger of being sent to work in the factories. A crisis in the affairs of the theatre might mean that he would lose his footing there. Certainly he would see what could be done. Mr. Wilcox only half believed him, for the luckless actor had been through so many crises that he had ceased to hope for any issue out of his afflictions. All the same, though he had never been anything but cruelly deceived, when a new enthusiasm cropped up he never failed to follow it. And now his old enthusiasm for Jamie was revived. Once more he saw his friend bringing the keen power of appreciation which was expressed in his writing to the service of the theatre. He had often maintained that all would be well if that young Lawrie would only come "right over," and stop fooling about with the bank and the minor activities of Thrigsby.—"Take off that beastly beard," he said now. "What's the good of having a

face like yours if you hide the best part of it?"—Jamie laughed at him.—"And it isn't only your face, it's your talents. Cut off your beard, drop the Quintus Flumen, let them know that it's James Lawrie who makes the broad-bottomed blood-suckers sit up, and make no bones about it."—"The bank wouldn't stand it."—"Then let the bank lump it."—"Where's the money to come from then?"—"Oh, damnation take the money. If they won't pay for art we'll give it them."—"You might if they'd give you the theatre and let you off the rent."—"You'd find someone to stand by you."—"I think not."—"Well, all I can say is that if you're against them as you are, you oughtn't to pretend to be with them. You don't injure them by shilly-shallying as you do: you only hurt yourself."—"But I'm not against them."—"You are. You know you are, only you've got some ridiculous notion of tolerating everybody and everything even though they let everything you care for starve to death. That's why you wear that beastly beard, because you can't bear to let them see you as you are."—This was nearer the truth than Jamie cared to allow. He said: "Nonsense. I've said I'll see what I can do and I will. I certainly agree that the theatre in this town is treated disgracefully, but I'm not so sure either that the town isn't treated disgracefully by the theatre. You're a conceited lot and I think that if an artist forgets his humility he deserves all he gets. I don't say that if he remembers it he gets what he deserves, but then, if he does remember, he probably doesn't care." Mr. Wilcox flamed out: "That's it. At bottom you don't care. You're a Scotchman and shrewd, and your shrewdness in the end will be the death of you as it was with that old tyke, Andrew."—"All right," said Jamie, "that remains to be seen." He prized the friendliness of Mr. Wilcox,

drunken and foolish though he might be, and indeed it was the friendliness of the theatre's atmosphere that he relished. Jealousy and spite there were in plenty but not the cold and ruthless misery of Thrigsbeian commerce. In the theatre a man would appreciate the success even of his enemy. Crude and undisciplined though it might be, yet there was the will to work for the common good, namely, to keep the theatre open in the face of the indifference of Thrigsby, whose people, however, were not without æsthetic pretensions. They had a public Free Library paid for out of the rates: they had the Picture Gallery instituted by Sophia's father: they had admirable weekly concerts founded by the growing German colony: only the theatre they would not patronise or regard as a source of pride. That, thought our James, with a touch of Greigishness, it would be for him to alter.

As he walked home with Fanny—for distances in Thrigsby were then still walkable—he asked her why she liked the acting, and her answer pleased him. She said: "It's like being in a story."—"But doesn't it matter what kind of a story?"—She thought that over a moment and then answered: "Oh! no."—And that settled for him one of the questions which had often puzzled him, why the actors were apparently unaware of the fact that they were boring their audience, and why they were hurt with surprise when he as critic informed them that they were so doing. It was true: it was nothing to Mr. Wilcox whether he were saying "Mesopotamia" or the Garden Speech from *The Winter's Tale*. It was nothing to Fanny whether she were Mustardseed or the Che-ild in melodrama. And somehow that was right for Fanny, but wrong for Mr. Wilcox. In Fanny's life there was still so much enchantment that art and poetry

could not be important to her. Indeed there was in Fanny so much beauty that no poet had ever caught in words, the beauty that poets saw in their dramas before ever it came to the repulsion which ended in expression.—Jamie had the repulsion but with him it never came to expression. He had always to go back again to make sure. Then there would be more repulsion, so that he was never sure for very long together. Therefore he clung to Fanny and the idea of her and dreamed fantastically of her future, when that which he saw in her would be revealed to all men and through them he would be sure. On that his queer untrained metaphysical Scots mind worked out a theory of the theatre which in its collective appeal made all men sure.—But did not the Church do that? It made them sure of a God moving in a mysterious way, but that only reconciled them to ugliness. He needed to be sure of beauty. Through Fanny and the theatre he would attain that end.—Now, he thought, he knew what he must do. Mr. Wilcox had given him the opportunity, Fanny the incentive. He must make it possible for everyone in the theatre, on either side of the footlights, to know and to share her joy in living in a story. If he could do that, or help to do that, he would have accomplished more than either of his brothers, and his sister Mary's letters would no longer fill him with envy and melancholy. That, he felt sure, was what Mary meant by England giving the world something for the privileges she had enjoyed.—He was absurdly and magnificently ambitious, but very happy, and strode along idealising Fanny as she trotted by his side, until he remembered that he had had much the same feeling when he watched her putting her little brother to bed and hearing him gabble his prayers and evening hymn.—"Pity my simplicity. Suf-

fer me to come to Thee." Exactly the same rush of adoration, the same swift and burning hope, the same melting into weakness and resignation.—Then he laughed and called himself a sentimental fool and told himself that if he could not do better than that he deserved to have the bad time which vaguely he had felt was in store for him, and most surprisingly had not yet arrived. First Selina, then Agnes, then Fanny had helped to make things bearable. It was a poor sort of man would always be taking refuge behind a woman's skirts. —And yet had he not always done so, beginning with wee Mary?—He was always inclined to believe the worst of himself, and did so now. He tried to shake off his ambitions for the theatre but failed miserably. He was committed to a line of action and did not like it at all. Against his will he had arrived at a conviction.

CHAPTER XXVIII

TOM'S MARRIAGE

BEFORE Agnes came on her visit—for the purchase with her future husband of furniture, household linen and clothes—there had been almost a quarrel between the two brothers. From Berlin Mary had sent her James, with whom alone she now kept up any regular correspondence, two handsome lithographs of J. P. F. Richter and J. W. von Goethe, writers of whom, through Mr. Carlyle, every cultured Scot had become aware. They were fine heads. You might vainly look for their like in Thrigsby. And James was proud of them. He wished them hung in the dining-room on either side of the portrait of his father. But Tom would not hear of it: beastly Germans glaring down at him while he ate his dinner? There were Germans enough in Thrigsby as it was; sufficiently disgusting to have to meet them in business without finding them at home when he got there.—"But they are very fine drawings," said Jamie. Tom examined them: "They are not drawings at all. They are prints."—"Of course they are: lithographs, drawn on stone."—Tom took down the Encyclopædia and turned up lithography and proved that no drawing was done on the stone, and that therefore the portraits could not be anything but prints.—"Have it your own way then," said Jamie, "but they are very fine and as

for their being German, they are poets, so that it doesn't count."—"Jean Paul never wrote a line of poetry in his life."—"How do you know? Have you read him?"—"No. Have you?"—"No."

So began a very pretty wrangle which was carried on for the best part of a week. Tom said the proper place for the pictures was a portfolio so that when Jamie wished to refresh his soul with them he could take them out and do so; or, if the wretched things were to be framed let them be hung on the landing well away from the skylight.—"I shall hang them in the dining-room," said Jamie, "and I don't know why you should be so dead set against the Germans. The Queen's a German and I don't know where we should have been at Waterloo without them."—"Excuse me," said Tom icily, "the Germans look like sheep and they *are* like sheep. Look at your Goethe! Did you ever see such a mutton-head?"—"He is the greatest genius since Shakespeare."—"You make me sick with your genius. What good is it? I'd like to know. All the trouble in the world that isn't caused by women is caused by genius."—"You'll deny Shakespeare next."—"I wouldn't mind. I never read him."—"Whom do you read then?"—"Malthus and John Stuart Mill."—"O, my God!"—"But I don't propose to disfigure the dining-room with their portraits." "I shall have the pitcures framed and I shall hang them in the dining-room."—"Then I shall remove them."

The pictures were framed and hung in the dining-room. Whenever Tom entered it he took them down from the wall, and as soon as he had left Jamie replaced them. At last they had their meals at different times and for six days did not speak to each other. Margaret tried to make each confess the cause of their difference but was met with the silence in which both were skilled.

She observed that the pictures had something to do with it and, to save further trouble, removed them and hung them on the landing. When Jamie asked her why she had done that she said that Goethe was an atheist and she could not have him in her dining-room without offending her visitors when they came to tea.—"And Jean Paul?" he asked, highly amused and beginning to recognise that the whole squabble had been more than a little silly.—"He must have been a friend of Goethe's," said Margaret, "or Mary would not have sent them together."—"You dear innocent," cried Jamie, catching her in his arms and hugging her.—"Don't do that," said she. "Where's your dignity? I shouldn't have minded such things when you were a boy, but you never did them then."—"That's true," said he. "I was too shy then. First shyness, then conceit to escape from the torment of it, then—God knows what."—"Love," said Margaret, "and it's quite time you followed Tom's example."—"And leave you alone, mother?"—"I've had years to get used to the thought of it."—"Then you'll be disappointed, mother, for I'm not for marrying."—"Then do you settle down and make a great name for yourself and conquer this wildness that has come over you."

That, however, was exactly what Jamie had no mind to do. His youth had come upon him rather out of its time but he was not disposed, for that reason, to forego it. He felt himself, every now and then, a free man, and every defiance of Tom accentuated that feeling. He looked forward to Agnes' coming. Tom might have all the wonder of her and yet be infinitely lower than himself. Tom might have her pledge, he would have her sympathy and would win more and more of it. Tom and she would be building their cage while outside he

would be free in mind and heart. Agnes might feel it; if so, she would be open to suffering. That would be his gift to her, the capacity for suffering; better, at all events, than the absolute negation in which Elisabeth, Andrew's wife, had perished.

In such fantasy Jamie thoroughly enjoyed himself, forgot his annoyance over the pictures and made it up with his brother. And then Agnes came. She was at tea with his mother when he returned from the bank. As soon as he set eyes on her his fantasy came tinkling down like a broken window. Already she had suffered. There was to be no triumph for him. He knew himself by the clear light of her eyes for the Harlequin that he was. He was to take his mood from her. That he realised in a flash. She was taking her marriage with Tom seriously. He had never allowed for that. To him it had never been anything but comic. Beauty and the Beast, the peculiar Thrigsbeian kind of Beast, that would admit neither enchantment nor wonder even in woman.—He greeted her kindly, sat down opposite her and munched buttered toast. He was afraid of her and was faced with the unpleasant fact that he had always been so.—"Is the wedding fixed?" he asked.—"Six weeks to-day," said she.—"I suppose you'll have a bigger house than this."—"Oh! no. Quite small to begin with."—"I wonder Tom didn't meet you at the station."—"He said he would if he could."—"You know how busy Tom has been," said Margaret, "ever since all this anxiety over the situation in America."—"Uncle Donald says things look so bad that we ought to wait until something is settled."—"Don't you wait," said Jamie, rather surprised at his own words. "If I were getting married I'd not let the Day of Judgment interfere with it."—"Jamie!" said his mother scandalised. However, seeing

that Agnes did not mind the profanity, she continued: "It does seem a shame that hard-working people should be upset by things that happen so far away. But if it is the Lord's will I suppose it must be done." And Jamie watched Agnes. He was puzzled and also a little alarmed by the new depth in her. She was thinner and, to him, even more beautiful than she had been; more alive, had less of the sweet stupid acquiescence which in most of the women of his acquaintance irritated him, though it had previously been an important element in her charm. Taking her marriage seriously, she was going to allow herself to be dragged into the welter of Thrigsby, where her fine quality would be ignored as completely as though she were entering a harem. Did she feel that? Was it the cause of her suffering?—But soon these questions no longer interested him. Her suffering hurt him and the hurt made other sensations impossible, and thoughts all foolish. By his sympathy he knew that he was separated with her from all that was going on round them. Yet they shared nothing except her suffering. To his hurt she was indifferent. She was, he knew, glad of it, for it accentuated and confirmed her solitude.—Then with a rush and a whirl of emotion he was all worship for her. She had that dignity which always and everywhere he was seeking, the dignity of the human soul that knows its loneliness, over the depths of which all passions, all sorrows, all delights pass and are gone. She was that woman in white of whom he had read in an old Quaker's book, who, in the centre of the earth, "sate, lookinge at time how it passed away." She was that woman, and she was a bride on the eve of her wedding day. There was the contradiction, there the suffering.—Her eyes met his and he saw how she was on her guard against him. He had divined too much.

All this over a tea-table! How amusing it was to return to the surface of things, to the queer ugly dining-room, to his mother's fussy proprietary air with her future daughter-in-law who was both to gain so much by entering the family, and also was to bring so much to it. Margaret was simmering with pride and happiness. Tom's wife had beauty, wealth and position. What more was needed?—and she was satisfied was Margaret: all her plans, all her privations had flowered in this. Her cup was full.

Then Tom came in and to his brother's torment Agnes at once became all charm, almost all coquetry. She rose to greet her betrothed, accepted gladly his embraces, and kissed him again when he produced a present, a jewel. Margaret crooned and purred over it and Tibby, coming in with fresh tea, was called to admire it. Then, quite definitely, Jamie felt that he was apart from them all, that they had some bond of union which he could not accept, though for another kind of union, one more intimate and less factitious, he was ripe and longing. For him Agnes was no longer herself, but a very charming compound of good manners, Greig tradition and conventional wifeliness. His rage turned against her. How could she, that had this true dignity, so submit, to being less than herself, and, being less than herself, enter upon the rare mystery of marriage? To have his rough and ready way with it was well enough for Tom, but for her?—Then Tom said: "You see, my dear, we are homely people."—And Agnes answered: "Homeliness is what I want. I sometimes wish I could be a poor woman, and make my own bread on Fridays and wash on Mondays."—"That, thank God," said Tom, "you will never be."—"No," capped Margaret, "you are spared that, Agnes."—"There's many a poor woman,"

said Jamie, "has a better time of it than the richest lady in the land."—"Then why," asked Tom frigidly, "do we all try to get rich and why are the rich respected?"—"God knows," said Jamie, "unless it is that they can make a show."—Tom turned to Agnes and said: "In another and a less happy country my brother would be a revolutionary."—"Why not say what you mean, Tom?" asked Jamie pleasantly. "I'd be a fool wherever I was."—"That," answered Tom, "I would never go so far as to say of one of my own blood, or indeed of any Scotsman."—"At any rate," continued Jamie, "Tom's no fool, is he, Agnes?" And Agnes blushed.—"Sometimes," said Margaret gently, "I wonder if my two sons will ever be grown men." And she put them both to shame by telling the story of the two German portraits. Agnes smiled and patted Tom's hand and said: "Now I know what to expect."

So conversation ran on, but Jamie's imagination was working furiously over this matter of his brother's marriage. It brought him very near to shaping an ideal. Mysteriously it had thrown his mother into the background. She and her beliefs were no longer significant, though they were remotely beautiful. All that comforted her—God, the Church, the family—was of no avail for this younger generation. They had the forms still but they were empty and there was no health in them. But where to turn for satisfaction? Tom apparently could fill the void with material success; he could materialise everything, even, apparently, the profoundest human relations, with a sublime and unshaken confidence, because the forms remained and he never suspected that they were meaningless. And Agnes, turning from her family, had thought Tom's way the best. It did at least lead to security.—How Jamie detested that

word! It resounded on all sides of him. The bank was safe, though its security rested upon nothing but the good will of its customers. Keith's was safe as long as there was cotton grown in America and a market in India made doubly secure by the British Government. Marriage was safe, a safeguard! That was how Agnes had been tempted. Jamie felt that he was near the truth, and this beautiful creature's suffering was so heartrending because it was so obscure.

He was always home earlier than Tom and was able to have several talks with Agnes. One day he asked her if she had never thought of entering a nunnery.—"Perhaps I have," she said. "But why do you ask that?"—"Something," he said, "that I feel in your nature."—"But I find life too amusing. Don't you?"—"So amusing that I can hardly bear it. I find so little that is serious."—"And yet you are more serious than any man I ever met. I find no reason for quarrelling with absurd things because they are not serious."—"But when everything seems absurd . . . ?"—"That could not happen. It would be too terrible if it could."—"I sometimes think that it is happening, that all the old values will go and that human activity will become undirected and idiotic."—"That is too philosophical for me."—"I don't want to be that."—"You oughtn't to be dissatisfied, Jamie. You Lawries have done very well."—"For whom?"—"For yourselves. I'm sure the way you have all stood by your mother is perfectly splendid."—"Aye, she's satisfied, or I imagine she is."—"If you stand by your wives half as well, you'll have done fine."—"But I think there's more to do than standing by women."—"Is there?"—"Perhaps it's in the way of doing it."—"But that must be different for everybody."—"That's true and my way's not everybody's."

—Agnes smiled at that: "No," she said, "I wouldn't expect it of you."

Not a flicker could he get out of her. She was serene, quick, ingenious to turn all his curious emotions back upon him. Almost she made him believe that his first terrible impression was illusory. Philosophical! All his passionate interest in her! Philosophical, and therefore not to be considered. He protested: "I tell you I feel that. We've stood by my mother but we've not believed in her, and if you do a thing without believing in it you have to pay dearly for it. She's believed in the Lawries as old Angus believed in the Greigs, but we younger ones don't: we don't believe in ourselves as Lawries and Greigs any more than we believe in ourselves as Christians, and we haven't the courage to believe in ourselves as human beings, as men and women. There's a deal of play-acting crept into it and for that reason we are driving the soul out of everything that we do."—Agnes was alarmed by the outburst and defended herself: "It isn't true, Jamie. It isn't true. I do believe in myself as a Christian woman."—"If you did," he replied, "you would be even now in a nunnery."—"You shall not say such things. You must be the unhappiest man alive to say such things."—He went and stood by the window gazing out into the little garden where in the apricot-coloured light of the evening sun there shone the golden tassels of laburnum, the white and mauve drooping heads of lilac.—"Yes," he said, "if I'm against that I'm against everything, everything that they do."—"Against what?" asked she.—"Against such marriages as yours."—"Oh! Jamie."—"I see a flowering beauty in you," he said, "like the beauty of yon flowers, and only such love as I have for them is worthy of you. I can laugh over most things but

not over the profanation of such beauty as that."—Agnes gave a little moan and he knew that she was weeping. He turned but she was gone.

Between the lilac and the laburnum Tom appeared in his top hat and broadcloth suit, carrying a little shiny leather hand-bag.—"Now," thought Jamie with a qualm, "she'll tell him and there'll be an unholy row."

It was so. Agnes did not come down to tea. Tom went up to her room and found her weeping and she told him it was because Jamie was so unhappy and had been saying such terrible things. Down came Tom in a fury:—"What have you been saying to Agnes?"—"I told her a little of what I felt."—"About what?"—"About the sort of life we live."—"Speak for yourself."—"I did."—"There are certain things of which we do not speak to women. A decent man would realise that a woman on the eve of her marriage is in a sensitive condition."—"All the more hope of her understanding a little of what one is talking about."—"There are certain things that I do not wish my wife to know."—Tom was very droll in his sternness; and Jamie flashed: "Look here, do you imagine that I have been talking dirt to her?"—"No. Trash, which amounts to the same thing. I know the sort of trash you love to chew until you can stand the taste of it no longer and must spit it out."—"That's a pretty simile," said Jamie smiling.—"I will not have it," cried Tom.—"You cannot stop the thoughts in my head."—"I will not have the pure mind of an innocent girl polluted with them. A lot of free-thinking, atheistical, bombastical trash."—"Hadn't you better find out first what I have been saying before you attempt to describe it?"—"Man, I know. I know the kind of things have been in your mind since you chose to associate with that adulterous beast

Hubert. You can't touch pitch without being defiled, and I've been a fool to let Agnes come here with you in the house. If anything of the sort occurs again I shall be compelled to forbid you to enter my house when I am married. A married man has his responsibilities."—Jamie's mind flew to old Andrew: the same pathetic uncomprehending belief in marriage as marriage, and very much as Andrew had married his Elisabeth was Tom now marrying Agnes.—"I think you've said enough," muttered Jamie. "We're on delicate ground and a word too much might be fatal."—"To whom?"—"To you. You might understand what you are doing."—"I know perfectly what I am doing, thank you. I have always made a point of that."—"Very well, then. I'm not interfering. Agnes and I have been very good friends. I hope we shall continue to be so."—"Don't abuse your friendship, that's all. *I* understand you. I hope Agnes never will, at least until she is more advanced in years."—"Magnificent Tommy!" laughed James. "The perfect Lawrie."—Tom took up his attitude by the fireplace.—"I have said all I wish to say. Bear it in mind and we can consider this regrettable affair closed. If you choose to make a mockery of me, you may, but you shall not in my hearing jeer at the family. The family is the basis of the state——"

Tibby came in:—"Thomas, do you wish the sheets marked with initials or with the full name?"—"They are to be marked T. A. Lawrie," said Tom, "and the same with the towels and table napkins."—"Thank you."—"I'd have thought you'd have linen sheets."—"The best cotton fabrics are the equal of linen."

Jamie chuckled and as Tibby went out her solemn face flashed a merry twinkle and her left eye closed in a wink. Jamie was very happy. He had Tibby to share

the joy of this sublime Thomas of theirs, who took everything solemnly because it happened to be himself who was doing it. But at once he was filled with grief at the thought of Agnes being drawn into that self-important existence. What room could there possibly be in it for her? What chance had she of finding there the intimacy which is the essence of marriage?—It was that hurt Jamie so, though he fought shy of it and would not think bluntly of it.

He had no further opportunity of talking with Agnes. She avoided him, or would only approach him through his affection for his mother, which, by her appreciation of it, was strengthened. That made for Margaret's happiness in which there was now no shadow. She felt even glad that Tom was going. She was so sure of him, but for Jamie she was afraid. There had always remained with her something of the mystery to a woman of her first-born, so much, often so overwhelmingly, the father's child. Very strangely, though she often played with the idea, the thought of Jamie's marrying filled her with dread, but for Tom she could excitedly rejoice.

And with her excitement grew daily. She worked with more than her usual exceptional energy at the house he had taken a couple of miles away near the Scots church, for Tom adhered to the faith of his fathers and would enter no place of worship where the Psalms were sung in the Book version. She was at the house all day long with Tibby, and often alone in the evenings. It was bliss to her to be there and to fill the house with dreams, of Tom repairing at last her downfall from her own family, bringing a Greig—no less! —to his bed and board. And often she would go back in memory to the days when she had had the rule of

a whole parish. Those days had been worth all the slights put upon her by the Keiths. She had served the Lord and seen to it that His name was regarded in every house. And the Lord had remembered His servant, and blessed her in her son Thomas. All Margaret's days before the wedding were days of thanksgiving and she prayed that Thomas might be blessed with sons who would carry the name of Lawrie higher yet so that in the end the Greigs and the Keiths and even the Allison-Greigs (though their behaviour over Hubert made them less important) should bow before it.

For Tom's wedding there were no false economies. Donald had bought a new silk hat, and Mrs. Donald a new grey satin gown, and Maggie was given five yards of a handsome brocade to have made up in the village. The church was crammed with flowers and the aisles were strewn with reeds and rushes. A Suffragan Bishop performed the ceremony. Agnes' father was unwell and Donald gave her away. Jamie was best man, though Tom had been almost insulting and practically said in so many words that the Greigs might think it queer if he had anybody else.

So Jamie stood behind his brother and watched him take Agnes to be his wedded wife. He saw how the solemnity of the occasion weighed upon her and it seemed to him that she was unhappily conscious of his presence, and he wished he had made excuses.

Tom's bearing was admirable. He looked handsome and carried his head high except when the parson was speaking and then he lowered it in simple humility. He seemed aware of, almost to proclaim, his strength; too strong, even to be disdainful. He was the rock to

which the frail creature, standing, almost swaying by his side, clung. Indeed they were a fine couple, for Agnes was nearly as tall as he, and every bit as dignified, in spite of the stiff white veil she wore which reminded Jamie of a meat-safe.

But the wedding was remarkable and interesting, apart from the nobility of bride and bridegroom. The church contained an unrivalled collection of Greigs, all solemn, sober, stiff, dour, some of them good-looking, some ugly, and not one of them poor. More than one had a tear for Agnes. She was, in a sense, all that was left to them of old Angus, and she was going out of the family. To them her wedding was almost as a repetition of the funeral of their great man. The occasion was solemn and they had paid handsomely for it in wedding presents. Matthew Greig's house was bursting with them: a harmonium, an alabaster model of the Acropolis, an ink-stand made of an elephant's tooth (from Surgeon-General Archibald Greig of the Indian Army), carvers, fish-carvers, game-carvers, a carved ostrich-egg, rose-bowls, a little Swiss chalet in a glass case, the poems of Wordsworth, the essays of Emerson, the complete works (to date) of Charles Dickens, the works of Schiller (from Mary), an embroidered screen from Maggie, and much money.—(Jamie and his mother had agreed to furnish their kitchen for them; his idea, so that Tibby could help.)

Nor was the breakfast stinted: there were aspics and birds, tongues, hams, pressed beef, eggs, trifles, a towering wedding cake, and for every guest a little gift. Donald made a speech; compliments to every illustrious Greig there present—the Surgeon-General, Professor Ian Storey Greig of Oxford, Alpheus Greig, the architect. As the head of the great family Donald was proud. He

touched on all the important events since the last gathering, triumphs which had added to the family's lustre, disasters which had failed to dim it. That said, he came to Agnes, her charm, her beauty, her grace, her bounty and her charity. He told a story of her as a child and tears began to flow. This treasure of the family they were giving back to Thrigsby, to their kinsman, Thomas Lawrie—a Keith every inch of him. That led to genealogy, in which there was a perfect orgy, and Walter Greig, a retired doctor, who was cracked on the subject, claimed through cousins' cousins' cousins kinship with Robert the Bruce. He began to sing *Scots Wha Hae* but was removed by Hubert, glad of the opportunity to escape from the speech-making.

Tom replied tactfully, even eloquently. He knew the part the Greigs had played in the making of Thrigsby, the part they were playing and would play in its great history. He was proud to be a Scotsman, proud to be a merchant in Thrigsby, but never so proud as on this day when he had Agnes Greig to be his wife.—"And the Lawries?" asked Jamie in a fury. "I am proud also to be a Lawrie." This was received in a silence so dead as to force Tom to sit down pale with wrath at his brother for having spoiled the effect of his speech.

The ladies soon left, for the bride must be prepared for her journey to London where the honeymoon was to be spent. The male Greigs crowded round Tom and incorporated him into the family with handshakes and initiation into one or two of the family jokes. Jamie was ignored and presently he slipped away. He was genuinely sorry for having spoiled Tom's triumph, for it was to him a parting of the ways and he wished that parting to be amiable.

He walked disconsolately down to the lake and there

rather to his annoyance found Hubert and Margaret, he discoursing to her of the beauties of the scene and comparing it with their native scenes in Scotland. Hubert had attached himself to Margaret from the moment of his arrival and had refused to be shaken off though she was magnificently frigid. He was bent on amusing her and in spite of herself she was amused. She did not often meet wicked people and was constantly in a pleasant state of alarm.—"I was telling your mother, Jamie, that you have done me more good than I have you harm, and that she must not object to my being here as it was Agnes' wish."—"And I was telling him," said Margaret, "that I am sure she did not consult Tom about it."—"Her last graceful act as an independent person," said Hubert; "but when I think of all the Greigs who are here to-day I am not sorry there is one the less."—"I must say," laughed Jamie, "that I am glad the Lawries are so few."—"Your father was an only son," said Margaret, "but he would have been a very proud man to-day, even though the service was Anglican."—Hubert chuckled: "I thought Tom looked a finer man than the Bishop. It isn't often one sees a bridegroom get the better of the parson. But when it comes to looks the Lawries have it. I'll say that for you, ma'am."—"Skin-deep," ejaculated Margaret. Hubert went on: "For brains it's the Keiths. As for the Greigs, they have what is better than beauty or brains—self-worship."—Margaret turned to Jamie: "The man has done nothing but talk blethers ever since I set foot in the place. Will you take me back to the house? We must be there to see Tom and Agnes off."

Jamie had one moment with Agnes. He held her hand in both his: "I hope you will be very happy," he said, "with all my heart."—"I'll wish you the same,"

said she, "and may it come to you soon. Don't waste all your life."

He dropped her hand. She ought not to have said that to him, on the threshold of so great a mystery. How in such a moment could she judge him? Was it no mystery to her? He felt very unhappy.—"I'll run my risks," he said.

Tom appeared surrounded by half-a-dozen Greigs. Jamie held out his hand, and muttered: "Good luck, Tommy." And Tom just touched his hand and said: "Remember, I trust you to look after mother." Then he climbed after Agnes into the best Greig barouche—three horses, with a postillion on the leader. Jamie was left speechless. Rice, slippers, flowers were thrown as the carriage moved off.—"O for a stone-bow to hit him in the eye!" said Jamie not knowing he was speaking aloud. A chuckle discovered Hubert at his elbow.—"I felt like that in church," said Hubert, "and now we have to share in the Greig family merry-making. If I had a magic carpet I would send it to London to fetch old Mother Bulloch."—"O damn you, Hubert," cried Jamie, "you are like an omen at the feast."

Hubert led Jamie away and told him with every air of enthusiasm that he had taken seriously to farming and cattle-breeding, or horse-coping as he preferred to call it.—"I'm tired of trying to make Thrigsby appreciate the blessings of culture and I'm going to feed the swine. The paper stops and with it what you made out of it. You'd better come and learn to be a farmer. I shouldn't be surprised if the bucolic was really your line."—Now Jamie suffered little by this new freak of Hubert's, but he knew that Currie Bigge and one or two others would suffer much. He first of all made an offer for the paper, which was accepted, and then he told

Hubert exactly what he thought of him.—"You are as heartless with your whims as the rest of the Greigs are with their mills," he said, and much more.—"My dear James," replied Hubert when he had finished, "don't for heaven's sake take your reactions seriously or you will end by becoming a bore. You just take your brother's tip. The only sane way to treat the Greigs is to get what you can out of them."

CHAPTER XXIX

NEWS FROM JOHN

BOTH Margaret and her first-born were nervous on their return home. The household had been organised for Tom and his absence left a painful gap and caused much moral dislocation. Both had indeed existed in deference to the successful member of the family; their hours had been his, their food his choice, their evenings, when all were at home, had been parcelled out by him. At nine Tom would play backgammon with his mother; at eleven he would take out his watch and say: "I am going to my bed," or "Mother, it is your bed-time." Then Margaret would take up her book and a box of throat lozenges, kiss her two sons on the brow and depart. Tom would hesitate for a moment and say: "So ends another day." Then he would follow her, leaving Jamie to take the large coals from the fire, put out the lamps, bolt the doors, and fasten the catches of the windows. Jamie would always linger and drink in the vitality of the quiet household in the darkness, for it had then a life of its own in the release of its essence. There were sounds and smells and queer shadows thrown through the windows; noises in the streets outside; and mystery everywhere. It was all very fine to dream of liberty, but except in this mystery what freedom could there be? And yet Tom's pres-

ence had denied it: Tom, taking out his watch, ended the day. Tom, asserting first right to the newspaper in the morning, began it.

With Tom removed Jamie was filled with hope and dread, hope that the days might be more free, dread lest Tom should have taken with him some essential of their economy. Deep in his heart was elation that the last immediate pressure of the Keith tradition was gone from his daily existence. He could assert himself, perhaps successfully enough to repair his mother's disappointment in him. That he had felt very keenly. She should not have been disappointed in him; she should have seen that Tom's way was not his. He and she were with each other so inarticulate. She had been very happy with Tom's preciseness, and it was discomforting for her to be left with Jamie's mystery.

For several days they groped through silence, fumbling for new habits until at last a day came when Jamie, over tea, gulped out: "I've bad tidings for you, mother." She trembled, but was at once firm: "Good news or bad," she said, "don't be afraid of it for me. Is it yourself?"—"No. There's no news of me. It's John."—"John? Not——" At once she thought of John dead, young proud John, dead.—"No," said Jamie, "the news is not from him, but here. Murdoch's have failed."—"Murdoch's?"—"The old story of giving credit to rotten people. They have let the bank in for a pretty penny, and they came to us through John and me."—"I was against it from the very first," said Margaret, "and so was Tom."—"It was a good firm then," replied Jamie, "but there's many a good firm dying of the new ways of business. I'm thinking what's to happen to John and Sophia and their bairns. Maybe it's easier out there to turn your hand to other work. I'm thinking

that Tom and I will send him out something to tide him over. It will be weeks before he can know, and whatever happened, John would not be one to ask for help." —"I should think not indeed," said Margaret, "but we can send it him and then, if he comes home, that will leave Tom free to find room for him in the firm."—"There's not much hope of that for, even if Tom would, John is even less Tom's man that I am and Tom knows that he has a better head for business."—"Better than Tom?"—"Aye, that's not unthinkable. I go so far as to say that if John had stayed here there would have been no failure in Murdoch's. He's canny and cautious and bold."—"Will you tell Tibby or shall I?" said Margaret in a hushed voice, beginning already to brood over the disgrace that had come upon her family. Tibby was informed of every event for good or evil: births, deaths and marriages were solemnly laid before her, almost as a rite. She had become, as it were, the visible conscience of the family, and, as such, even Tom had felt and acknowledged her power. She was a good and loyal conscience and accepted that she was there rather to be informed than consulted.

In the evening Jamie called Tibby from the kitchen to his room and told her of his anxiety.—"Indeed," she said, "I thought things were going overwell. It was time you had a reminder."—"A reminder of what?"—"That you can't have everything to your liking or all your own way. But I did not conceive that the blow would fall on John, him so far away. I thought he would have escaped and it would have been you or Tom —and you most likely. I hope the mistress has not taken it too unkindly."—"No. She has been very brave. She asked me to tell you."—"I would have preferred her to tell me herself but they are few words I get now

from her lips. You said I should never be a servant, Jamie, but I am that."—"No, no. You have been with us so long, and grown up with us."—"I am a servant, Jamie, and I would prefer not to be told anything that it does not come easily to tell—for the mistress, I mean. She meant kindly by me, I know, but being together has been too much for us, and what can't come from her can't come from you."—Very gaunt she was as she stood there fingering her apron. There was only one lamp in the room, on Jamie's desk. She was in the shadow, hovering, shifting, swaying. Again, as once or twice before, he had in her presence the feeling of an impact with some profound reality and immediately he was filled with sympathy for her. He did not understand her scruple, but he was moved to ask her: "Are you unhappy, Tibby?"—She answered: "I'm not one of those who look for happiness, or unhappiness either, being born as I was."—He knew her to be sensitive on that point and was a little irritated with her for introducing it.—"It's a poor life," he said, "cooking, washing, cleaning."—"I've no scunner against it," replied she. "It's my work and you must be cooked for, washed for, cleaned for and I would not let any other body do it now."—"Is it Tom's going has upset you?"—"Nothing's upset me. There's nothing to worry over in John. He can look after himself. And as for Tom, if the country were invaded and conquered he would be the last man in it to be ruined."—"Then, if my mother——" Tibby moved towards him.—"You have not to say a word to her. She'd send me away if she knew what I've said to you. She'd send me away."—"But you have said nothing."—On that Tibby laughed, a little weary chuckle.—"Less than nothing would be enough for her."

Jamie remembered Fanny Shaw saying that Tibby looked like a witch. She did so now and he felt as though she had cast a spell on him, for he could not take his eyes off her nor resist the tug at his heart nor raise the strange weight that had come upon his brain. She withdrew back into the darkness and hovered there by the door. Presently she said: "It's right now, Jamie. Just you and me and her in the house, and in the end me and her."—The note of warning in her voice sent a chill through him.—"Rubbish, Tibby, you're not yourself. You should have a holiday. Go home."—"I have no home but this."—"Then go to Scotland."—"I'll never go to Scotland now my father's dead."—"Then let me take you to the theatre."—"No. The theatre's the ruin of you."—That struck home. She had gone too far. He was not going to have that. He rose and moved towards her. For a moment she confronted him then shrank away and slipped out of the room.

With his mind he followed her down the dark stairs to the kitchen and formed a picture of her brooding, weaving out of hints and whispers the story of the family, but he saw her doing this as an artist, indifferently: of her feeling, or of where it lay, he imagined nothing. And yet unconsciously he believed her assurance that no harm would come to his brother. Here he found himself sharply divided from his mother who fretted and worried over it all day long. She had made no allowance for failure in her plans: even when her sons had crossed them they had prospered. Almost she persuaded herself that the failure of Murdoch's was a direct intervention from above to punish her for some sin that, for all her admirable intentions, she had committed. The discovery of the sin became with her an engrossing labour, an obsession. She had not properly

dedicated her offspring to the Lord: she had taken too wordly a delight in them. Every day she wrote long letters not only to Tom and John but also to Agnes and Sophia, exhorting them not to allow their children to depart from the way of the Lord—as laid down by Andrew Keith and Angus Greig, who had accepted their worldly goods humbly as the due reward of just servants. She imagined that Tom and herself had achieved their measure of success more by works than by faith and therefore she was punished.

Every night she made Jamie read the Bible to her, more particularly the Mosaic prohibitions. She was a good Old Testament woman heeding Thou Shalt Not more than Thou Shalt. The reading of each night provided her with material for the writing of each day.

Jamie had to post her letters with his own. He was conscious of a strain between his mother and himself and fancied that her letters were her means of relief from it. She was absorbed in her own conscience-stricken thoughts, and he took this absorption to be an instinctive withdrawal from himself. He suffered because he was conscious of failure. The house, with Tom gone from it, seemed too big, even pretentious. His clearest and dearest idea of Margaret was in the little house in Kirkcudbright. There she was in her right setting, struggling, fighting, filling all that place with her spirit. But now there was no fight in her. She resented the disaster to John, she was bitter and vengeful, and she avenged herself on both Jamie and Tibby. They had dreadful days but neither let the other suspect the pain they were suffering. Neither could help Margaret. All her thought was for Tom. He must repair the disaster, must send for John and take him into the firm.

When Tom returned from his honeymoon, which business extended from London to Lille with a journey through the north of France, she went to see him, then to stay with him, and every night he had to listen to his mother's argument. He must send John money. He pointed out that Sophia had money.—"Then she can put that into the firm for John."—"But, my good mother, I have my partners to think of and business is not what it was for the old firm."—"But trade does not stand still."—"No. The markets grow as new people come into the trade, and new people mean new methods."—"Then what *is* John to do?"—"That is John's affair. He knows better than we do the openings out there."—"Then you refuse to help your own brother?"—"It is not a question of refusing, it is a question of inability. Business is not what it was. The old personal relations are gone and there is no longer room for a man merely because he is your brother or your friend."—"But you can *make* room. Your family comes first."—"No, my dear mother, the firm comes first. As a public-spirited man, the firm comes first. If it is a matter of helping John over a difficult period, well and good, though you should remember that he has brought his misfortunes upon himself. We all had equal chances. I am sorry that he has not used his better."

Margaret returned home and did not again ask Jamie to read the Bible. She sat, lost in thought, with an expression of bewilderment upon her face. She was not hurt, but simply puzzled. Her innocent faith in her original plan was shocked but by no means destroyed. She was still unaware of the lack of faith in Tom. It was true, what he had said, that John had brought his misfortunes upon himself and she had failed in not asserting her authority. But that was not altogether

her fault, but was due in part to her tragedy and her presumption in dreaming that, once in Thrigsby, Andrew Keith, that great man, would be a father to her sons. She had been blind, and lacking in common-sense. Of course Andrew could not acknowledge them or help them until they had proved themselves. Tom had proved himself. The others had been headstrong. They had failed. She looked sullenly upon Jamie. He had been a bad example for John.

As for Jamie, he had taken refuge, as so many times before, behind the written word, discovering a new literary delight in the Bible, and, saturating himself in it, he had passed on to *Paradise Lost,* which he had never before been able to read. Now he perceived its beauty, the nobility of its architecture, and it contained for him the truth of the life against which he was in revolt. The God of the poem seemed to him abominable, but he recognised him as the God of his mother. He was by now a thorough-going evolutionist and saw—(not very clearly for he was an undisciplined thinker, dependent upon fierce and often blasting flashes of light)—that the Gods also are evolved by man and perish as from man they grow more remote. The God of the poem was an egoist without grace, whereas Adam and one or two of the angels were in grace. It seemed to him then that Milton had penetrated in the mystery of human nature only to the angelic sphere, and had not touched the Godhead, and there he fell behind Shakespeare whose very thieves, pimps and bawds were in their motions God-like, with dignity and laughter. There was more God in Falstaff than in Milton's Jehovah whose greatness was too much asserted, too little revealed, and yet how moving and how beautiful was

the wedded love of Adam and the Mother of Mankind, how noble and how sweet the love of the angels:

"Whatever pure thou in the body enjoy'st
(And pure thou wert created) we enjoy
In eminence, and obstacle find none
Of membrane, joint or limb, exclusive bars.
Easier than air with air, if Spirits embrace,
Total they mix, union of pure with pure
Desiring, nor restrained conveyance need
As flesh to mix with flesh, or soul with soul."

The angelic, he saw, was but a condition of the spirit of man, yet lower than the highest, lacking the true grace without which the fullness of love is not. That only could be known to the human spirit in its highest flight whose pure and serene joy man had mistakenly called God. God must be beyond that joy which is in the approach to Him, the all-living and unceasing creator and destroyer, the supreme Being in whom all is.

In such thoughts Jamie had his highest joy. When he turned from them to life he was shocked by the discrepancy, and enraged by his inability to confirm his thoughts. By his daily life they seemed to be denied. No word did he ever hear spoken that could endorse them, and against his will he was driven into isolation. The real solitude of his soul he could accept, but apparent solitude, lack of cohesion with his fellows was a denial, was an infringement of it. Yet he lacked the strength to save himself, for he had no power to concentrate and clarify his vision. His weakness lay in that, if he was amused, he was content. If he was not amused then he would take refuge in some game, mental or emotional, or, in his worst condition, he would

resort to the trick of letting his thoughts and emotions play hide and seek with each other. He would often marvel at the apparent simplicity of those about him, and wonder why, if they were spared, as they seemed to be, the tortures through which he struggled, they were not more amiable, and why there appeared such a lack of purpose in all their doings. They were all busy in the creation of Thrigsby. Why, then, if they were so simple, and straightforward, did they not create it better? Why did they accept the making of money as good evidence that they were doing well enough?

His mind, it is to be observed, had become, for better or worse, critical. Those processes of the intelligence which he had acquired in the theatre he had begun to exercise upon life and upon himself. He was unusual only in that he had more humour for the contemplation of himself than for his consideration of life, which he was apt to regard as though it were a play, a creation by familiar and discoverable machinery. Forced by his development and the spirit of his time to discard the current forms of religion, as representing a metaphysic no longer valid, he performed the act of rejection so violently as to leave himself exhausted and almost unaware of his need for a religion. And he looked for it in the acts and practices of everyday life, and, naturally, he looked in vain. Though he could understand perfectly his mother's anxiety over John, and even her self-castigation, he could not help being impatient with her, and, helplessly, he saw the gulf between himself and her widening. His high hopes of a greater freedom in Tom's absence were dashed to the ground. Margaret became Tommish and assumed the headship of the household, dictating the time for bed in the evening and

claiming the first sight of the newspaper in the morning.

At length, in exasperation, and by way of asserting himself, Jamie brought down from the landing the portraits of Goethe and Jean Paul and hung them in the dining-room on either side of the portrait of his father. He did this one night after his mother had gone to bed. When he came down in the morning the pictures were removed. He could not let it pass and said: "I thought now that Tom is gone that I would use the dining-room for my study."—"If I am to eat in this room," answered Margaret, "it will not be beneath those heathen Germans."

There were other differences, over food, over the place of the lamp in the drawing-room at night, over his intolerance of an antimacassar on his chair, but, in spite of these, perhaps because of them, he discerned slowly and over many days a new beauty in his mother. She seemed definitely shaped and fixed in type—Miltonian he called her, having amused himself with dividing his friends and acquaintances into Miltonians, Shakespeareans and neuters. Her costume had become fixed, black with white collar and bands, with soft linen cuffs at her wrists. Her skirts were full, her bodice tight and unadorned. Upon her grey hair she wore a spotless white mutch with wings that swung out behind her as she walked. With a rare dignity she walked, very erect, with her head a little bowed as though she were continually acknowledging herself to be the servant of powers greater than herself. Very silent was her tread so that it was almost terrifying when she came into a room. Not even a rustle of her wide skirts announced her coming. The whole personality of the woman was immediately there to be faced and reckoned with. Jamie

could neither face nor reckon with her. For him she had gained most awfully in power. This it was that forced him to see her beauty and behind it her hostility.

Often he endeavoured to assert himself. Sometimes he would try to win her support for what he most cherished in her doings, but his attempts were futile. That he held a good position in the bank was her sole satisfaction in him. All else that he did, every friendship that he made, she ignored. He felt that she was alarmed for him. She watched over him and deep in her inmost tenderness she was fearful and hungry for him. He had already betrayed the family in his encouragement of John. What next would he do?—She did not see that Tom also had betrayed the family to industrialism. How then could she see that her eldest son, partly because of this betrayal, but most because of his hatred of all tyranny and his passionate but still unconscious desire to reconcile the responsibility of human love with freedom, was, in his turn, revolted against industrialism and bent upon betraying it? She was unhappy, knew not the cause, and was hardened in her pride.

Sometimes for days together she would hardly speak and would be busy in the household or with charitable works. Her shadow filled all the house. Jamie and Tibby would creep together in the dining-room or the kitchen, and whisper strangely, hardly knowing what they said, each imploring the other to invent some way to distract Margaret from her brooding. Neither could think of any way. Tibby would excel herself in cooking, Jamie would bring home flowers, but they could win neither gracious word nor smile.—"You'd think all her heart was out with John," said Tibby one night. —"Oh! Tibby, I sometimes think her heart must be in

the grave."—"She's a living woman."—"But never meant to live in a place like this," said Jamie, "or in times like this."—"Is there ought wrong with the times?"—"Aye," said he, "men have seen themselves as monkeys."—Tibby whispered: "Not you, Jamie."—Then he found her hands in his and himself gazing down into her gaunt ugly face.—"I see your hair's grown well again, Tibby. She took that off your head." "It was for Maggie," said she, "and I owed more than that to the family." She smiled up at him and they felt rather foolish, she in her soiled cooking-apron with the grime of the kitchen still on her cheeks, and he in his fine broadcloth. And behind them suddenly appeared Margaret holding a letter in her hand and crying: "Jamie! Jamie! There's word from John. He's coming home!"

Tibby slipped away. Margaret came to her son and took his face in her hands and kissed him. Her cheeks were flushed, her breathing came heavily. She had been weeping.—"Oh! Jamie," she said, "my prayers have been answered. He is coming home! He is rich!"

Jamie read the letter. It was a song of triumph from John. Immediately on receipt of the news from Murdoch's, he had bought the Australian stock. There had been a gold rush. He had had a share in a corner in corrugated iron, was now realising the profits which would amount to many thousands of pounds. As soon as he had put his affairs in order he proposed to return home there to enter politics, or, if his health made that impossible, to study the principles of political economy and to prepare his sons for the career which had been denied himself. And he remained his mother's affectionate and obedient son.

Jamie folded the letter up: "That's Tom and John,

mother. You should be a proud woman."—"I am that," said she.—"Then bide your time for me," he said, and to his astonishment she touched his arm affectionately and replied:—"No. You mustn't go yet awhile."—"I'll wait till John comes home with his riches," said he. "We'll see what riches and a travelled mind will do for us. If a letter from John can bring back the spirit in us, think what John himself might do. John standing there, where Tom used to stand, by the fireplace, and talking canny wisdom. Ech! If John had kept his pair of lungs he would have talked his way until he'd go before the Queen next but one to the Archbishop of Canterbury."—Margaret smiled reprovingly:—"We're not a talking family," she said. "Will you come now and read John's letter aloud to me? I want to hear it."

He followed her to the drawing-room where she sat in her chair by the fireplace and he read aloud John's letter. When he had finished he had to begin all over again. Then he promised that the next day she should come and fetch him from the bank and they would both go out to tell Tom the news.—"I don't think," said Jamie, "that I should tell Tom that John is rich until we know *how* rich. It would worry him."—Margaret saw the fun of the remark and replied: "But we will tell him." And she added, folding her hands: "Do you know, I feel like the mother of Tobias in the Apocrypha."—"My dear mother," said Jamie, "I often feel that you are like all the mothers in the Bible."—"There are very few," said she, and Jamie, who had begun to be a little sentimental about the mothers in the Bible, was shocked into an appreciation of his mother's sense of fact. She liked success because it was a goodly fact,

whereas he disliked facts whenever they loomed so large as to obscure reality. This success of John's had in truth rather distressed him and the best way to be rid of it would be to present it to Tom.

CHAPTER XXX

MORLEY STREET TRANSFIGURED

THE patient and careful reader, if patient and careful writing have led him so far, will remember a panegyric, which like a peal of trumpets hailed the arrival of James Lawrie in Morley Street, that noble expression of Thrigsby's early dignity when merchants had the air of diplomatists and bankers cherished the future of England as impressively as statesmen guard her present. Magnificent though that expression was it failed to satisfy a younger generation possessed by the idea that nothing could express importance but size. Factories and warehouses no longer expanded economically to meet needs. They must be enlarged by the thousand thousand cubic feet. The boundless expansion of trade would fill them. Thrigsby possessed in the John Bright Hall the largest place of public assembly in the north of England. The Town Hall had been added to. The Cotton Exchange had been rebuilt. A great house in Morley Street had been converted into an art gallery. The German colony had caused the erection in the Derby Road of a Gentleman's Concert Hall where could be heard the sweetest music in all England. The Thrigsbeians did not go to hear it but they boasted of it. They liked brass bands and they got them in the Victoria Gardens and Zoological Collection. If there was to be a noise, let there be much noise;

if money, then much money; if bricks and mortar, then much bricks and mortar. Happy Thrigsby, to desire only that which can be easily expressed, to aim only at that which can be lightly won, to have so constant a stream of success that there shall never be the shadow of a thought of the cost of it! Happy, happy Thrigsby to call in from the country-side new, abundant and eager life and to have, when that is used up, coming in from the country-side, life eager, new and abundant! To use up human life in the creation of trade, to be able in so doing to destroy beauty, to ignore love, and the joy of little children! Thrigsbeians were very happy then in the erection of enormous buildings, with every two miles or so a little church just to assure themselves that, though they really preferred the places in which they spent their weekdays, they had not forgotten the God of their fathers. Yet, somehow, their churches all looked rather casual, for they were built on plots of land which had been forgotten, or through some close-fisted dealing had been left until they were useless for any other purpose, or by some evil proximity had been made cheap. The Low Churches had the best of it because they had most adherents and the few High Churches had to be built on slag-heaps or marches. Chapels seemed to be much more at home among the warehouses and in the streets of little houses, for those who frequented them assumed (or so their frankness would lead one to suppose) that God did not mind a little ugliness more or less. But the massive banks could redeem the poorness of the churches. There are High and Low in banks also, and the Thrigsby and District was distinctly Low. Cateaton's was the bank of Thrigsby's representative men: the T. & D. that of the Thrigsby which they represented, and the representative men were puzzled that

Thrigsby should need a bank. The city was their creation, it existed in order to be represented by them. It ought not to develop institutions without consulting them. They were broad-minded. Did they not believe in *laissez faire?* They could admit the right of disreputable things, such as anarchy, Roman Catholicism, and Irish Nationalism to exist and find public expression, but they could not admit of any other respectability and prosperity than that for which they stood. When therefore the T. & D. built itself an enormous Florentine palace with little windows strongly barred and a vast door wide enough and tall enough to admit the train of elephants of an Indian rajah, Cateaton's went one better, bought a whole row of houses opposite their premises in Morley Street, pulled them down and put up a Grecian structure, with fluted pillars and enormous plate-glass windows, as to show that the power of Cateaton's lay in something more than the mere hoarding of cash, and the door was made so that, but for the steps leading up to it, it could have admitted the Lord Mayor's coach. This pile was severe and, in intention, dignified, a reproach to the vulgarity of the T. & D. It was the last triumph of Mr. Rigby Blair, for before the glass was put into the windows, and the brass fittings were supplied for the great general office, he was laid low with a stroke, and was never the same man again. He recovered and struggled back to his work but the general feeling was that he must retire, and Jamie, who had been for some years his chief lieutenant, became his captain, consulting him after instead of before the event.

At the top of Cateaton's new building was a house for the manager where Mr. Rigby Blair hoped seraphically to dwell. He was a hospitable little creature and all the thought he could spare from the circulation of cash

and credit and the behaviour of the money market was devoted to the house-warming, or rather the house-warmings he would give; one for men and potations, and one for ladies and polite entertainment. When he was stricken and Jamie had to go and see him every day he would talk of little but the new building and his house-warming and he wondered whether it would be beneath the dignity of Cateaton's to have something really convivial, and he even hinted that Jamie should introduce some of "the Bohemians," beings who, to Mr. Blair, lived in another and a nether world. They decided that if it was to be "staff," then the Bohemians could be admitted, but that, if the Directors were to be invited, then the Bohemians could not come unless it were professionally, to sing, recite and make music. Clearly the little man was hoping for some dedication with delight of the crown of his life work. He had given the bank an entity, whereas in the old days it had been merely the instrument of Elias Cateaton, to whom it had been nothing compared with his own reputation. To Jamie on the other hand it was merely the means of getting his bread and butter and as he sat talking to his chief he wondered how far the little man suspected him, deciding finally that Mr. Blair was incapable of imagining any such thing. It would have been blasphemy to him and that being so there was an irony, which Jamie did not fail to appreciate, in his being marked out to succeed to the managership and the house above the new head office.

When Margaret called for him on the day after the receipt of John's news he took her to see the new premises, where a horde of workpeople were hurrying to catch up the time lost by the contractors. They entered through the vast doors, and pushed open the new

swing doors leading to the vestibule by the counter. Behind this were rows upon rows of desks, each with a brass rail and a green lamp.—"It is enormous," said Margaret; "you'll feel lost in it."—"I do," said Jamie. "It's so impressive that I shrivel up in it. It frightens me to think that I might one day be manager of all this, seeing to it that not a penny goes through the place without earning its little bit of interest."—That was beyond Margaret to whom money was still a miracle beyond the understanding of man.

He took her to see the Board-room and the Manager's parlour where he would one day sit and advise shrewd men and anxious ladies about their investments and agree to loans on good tangible security, honesty being no longer security enough, or rather the bank, unlike Elias Cateaton, being no judge of honesty. He showed her the drawers where the gold would be kept, and the labyrinth of strong-rooms, some of them already in use. In one there were many bags of gold and Margaret was tremendously impressed, and put on the expression she wore in church, so that Jamie felt confirmed in his old notion that there was some kind of God dwelling in the bank, a conception which could exercise tyranny over the human mind and impede its fine apprehension of life. The combination of his mother and the bank roused the rebellious instinct in him as it had not been roused for many a long day. She so perfectly approved and bowed down before this vast machinery which seemed to him excessive and ostentatious, horribly impersonal and therefore dangerous, a useful abstraction become concrete and a burden. The strong-rooms were like catacombs to him and he felt stifled. He hurried Margaret away and they climbed up many stairs to the manager's "house."—"I should

have to live here," he said, "if I were made manager. Would you come too?"—"You would have a wife then, I hope," said Margaret.—"Not I. I'm well enough with you and Tibby."—He could not say what he was feeling, how it disgusted him to think of bringing a young bride to dwell in such a place, what a desecration it would be, the offering up of love and wedded bliss and the lovely mystery of birth to money. As they wandered through the rooms and Margaret criticised their disposition he could not away with the idea. It might be his fate to be swallowed up by Mr. Blair's machine but he would not drag after him the fairest beauty in life. His heart was heavy but he had one of those extremely pleasant moments when a man has the illusion of seeing the future before him and of facing it, though he likes it but little, with a proud determination. In short our James saw himself living, a chosen celibate, in the blessed apartments designed by the Cherub for himself above his temple.

Margaret, on her side, had begun to think better of her eldest son. Nothing in Tom's place of business had impressed her so much as the strong-rooms. Tom's office was, after all, more than a little squalid, and it was impossible to see at a glance what was being done there or what it stood for. She understood better Jamie's malicious pleasure in John's success, and she began to share it, and to cast about in her mind for ways of playing with Tom, the indubitably and traditionally successful. She had her share, though in a very small proportion, of the sardonic Keith humour, and as they left the bank she had a pleasant and unusual sensation of being at one with James, the moody, the obstinate, and the perverse. She was pleased with him for showing her over the new bank, for she imagined that

he had done so out of pride. She could approve of that and forget the idea with which she had so long comforted herself that he was unhappy and in his heart sorry for the day when he had left Keith's mill. Almost she began to feel that she had humbled herself unduly before the Keiths who had never treated her well. The Lawries had been well able to take care of themselves. Then as they walked away from the bank a horrid thought seized her. She asked Jamie: "Would a manager be a kind of partner?"—He assured her, no. A manager would be a very powerful being but still in receipt of a salary. That dashed her. Real success in her eyes lay beyond salaries: indeed, it began where salaries ended, where a man hovered mysteriously and awfully above a business and accepted its profits as they exuded from it in a cloud, much as the Papist God may be assumed to accept incense. Your truly successful man must be in a position to exact homage and fear as well as labour and money from those beneath him.—At the base of all Margaret's conceptions was the notion of tidiness, of keeping everybody in his place, with herself at the top: not that she was at all a conceited woman, but she was religious. That was how the Lord behaved and that was how she thought she, who dwelt in the Lord, ought to behave. The success of her sons left her free to imagine that she was doing so. It was all perfectly clear and simple to her because she could ignore everything that contradicted her idea. For all that, she was shrewd and quite a keen critic of the human comedy, which, when it did not threaten her programme for her earthly and divine existence, constantly amused and enlivened her, She knew the ways of men and women with each other, and, had Jamie ever consulted her, she could have enlightened him, startled him and

done him a world of good. But he stood in too great awe of her, and, merely because she was his mother, imagined that there were certain aspects of his life and of life generally to which she was blind. And yet both, had they been friends, could have shared to the full the comicality of things, for both could take a hearty delight in the humour of life among men and women who have lost their innocence and its grace so that vanity has become in them an offensive and no longer a defensive element in their constitution. Yet because they had always lived together they could not be friends, but were mother and son sharing nothing but the habit of living and their profound but well-nigh inarticulate affection. They were not even aware of sharing their malicious joke at Tom's expense, but felt it almost strange that they should be going to Hill House together. And both, for different reasons, were shy of meeting Agnes.

Hill House lay some miles away. It stood on a green bank rising high above the already filthy river. It had been the house of a very rich man and had lawns and fruit and vegetable gardens, stabling for three horses and a coach-house with a handless clock above it. In the front it had ten yards of drive enclosed with laurels and by the door was a leaden statue of a naked boy holding a lamp. For a newly married couple it was an absurdly big house but Tom had felt that he could not take Agnes to anything less, or, at least, that to a smaller place he could never invite Donald Greig to dinner. Also, through a friend, he had got it cheap, and the landlord had agreed to paint it outside and in before occupation, also every five years to paint outside.

Agnes from her parlour saw her relations-in-law enter the drive and she was not above opening the door to them herself. When she did that Jamie knew that Tom

was not at home. Though he had not often been to the house yet he knew its ways and how intent Tom was on the observance of every formality.

The house had that curious raw emptiness of the houses of the newly married who have not yet shaped their belongings to their character or indeed their character to their new life. Agnes was rather pathetic there in her great parlour with its new paint, new chintzes, new furniture, new ornaments. They were not her background and without her background, for Jamie at least, she lost in beauty. She needed the lake. It had been wonderful to him to look from her eyes out over to the fells. She needed the collective adoration of her family; that most of all. She had been the centre of all the love of which the Greigs were capable, and to replace that Tom seemed somehow inadequate. Jamie was very sensitive to the rawness and the emptiness of the house, and, as usual, unreasonably making staight for the affections, he scented failure there. He was right, of course, and with anybody else he would have been as indulgent as his mother, who knew the pain of early married life and the slippery nature of its happiness and how fond couples laboriously build up a store of memories and how they discover means of communication and how they are quickly bound even by their knowledge of how to hurt each other. Margaret enjoyed seeing anything so ordinary and human going on in Tom's life, but where Agnes was concerned Jamie's humour deserted him and he could not bear the thought of failure. Suffering she might have, but not the nagging pain of stupidity and lack of sympathy.

Agnes explained that Tom had some meeting but would be back soon. She had been trying the effect of the Dürer prints over her mantelpiece. She had had a

little difficulty with Tom because of his absurd objection to Germans. She told him Dürer was a Dutchman and then Tom looked him up in the Encyclopædia. (She wished encyclopædias had never been invented.) It was all very silly, especially as Tom had given her the pictures.—"He didn't!" cried Jamie.—"Years ago," said Agnes.—"But I sent them myself," said he, and was sorry at once that he had spoken, for she looked so hurt. She understood at once how she must have grieved him and made matters worse by pretending to ignore it and she went on: "But I insisted on them being hung here." As if it mattered that she had triumphed over her husband: as if it were not shameful that she should need to triumph! Down with a crash came Jamie's year-long idealisation of her, and all his power of resistance was swept away and he was forced to face the fact that Agnes was mated with his brother through some fitness in herself, through her own will to surrender, finally, that, whether she knew it or not, she had surrendered. There swept through him a cold wave of emotional perception in which he saw marriage as a refuge into which men and women creep away from the threatening storms of their existence. For a moment he had a sick sense that he was prying into the affairs of others, but that he flung away. This perception had been surprised in him. It had given him valuable knowledge, stripped him of foolish illusions concerning Agnes and only warmed his affection for her, while at the same time it had given him back some respect for his brother, since he was compelled to see that the marriage was not only a matter of calculating ambition. If marriage were the refuge of weakness it was none the less profound for that, though it meant confinement instead of release. But how much of good humanity must perish in confinement!

How much already of the beauty in Agnes was withered away. Some of the rawness, some of the emptiness of the new house was permanent. It was designed to keep out the strength and the joy that alone could entirely fill it, and much though he often hated his own home Jamie preferred that to this. His mother seemed to him a finer creature than Agnes. A part at least of her nature had been fulfilled.

He had created a strain and to break it Agnes sat at her new piano and sang. She had a very sweet voice but the songs she sang were sentimental and most grimly appropriate, the soft sighing after emotions that had for ever become impossible, or, most vilely, a pretty imitation of them. Jamie's blood ran cold. He understood then so much of what he most hated in Thrigsby, in the thoughts and the writings of his contemporaries. "Have done!" he raged within himself. "Have done! If it is your will to deny your feelings and your deep desires then have done with them, leave them to those who have more courage than yourselves."—But Margaret praised Agnes' singing and thought it very pretty. She liked Tom's house. It was not so very much smaller than Clibran Hall and Agnes was just the charming accomplished wife it needed. She would have been glad had Agnes been no more than that but she too had her qualms about the marriage. Tom in his own queer way was devoted to his wife, and Margaret knew that she had been replaced in his thoughts, too easily replaced and by something that in her heart of hearts she despised. Her own marriage had been deeply satisfying to her strong nature, always a wonderful astonishment that in the weak sensitive man of her choice there had been a joy stronger a thousand times than her strength. It had seemed to her so unique in her husband, so mys-

teriously his, that she was blind to it in all else. It had been strongest in him when he came to her for protection. She looked for it only in those whom she could protect, while at the same time she would protect only those in whom she found his peculiar tender weakness. Where there was any strength she was indifferent for her widowhood had led her to believe self-reliance all-sufficent. She as well as Jamie knew that Agnes had failed in self-reliance, and therefore it had hurt her so easily to be replaced.

Tom was not long in returning. He came in in the middle of a song. Agnes stopped at once and went to him, seeming to wait upon his mood. It was a bad one and she wilted.—"Did you have a good meeting?"—"No. Bad."—"I'm sorry. Jamie and mother came in."—"So I see. How are you, mother?"—"I'm well," said Margaret. "We've had news of John."—"Oh! Is he well? And how's Sophia?"—"All well."—"I suppose he's not such a fool as to be coming home. England's not a fit country to live in since the Crimean War."—"Why?" asked Jamie. "Trade's never been better."—"Just the point," said Tom. "What's to become of agriculture? No one knows where we are or what we are. Some people say we're an Empire, other people say we're a free, trading nation. All I know is that the manufacturing classes aren't properly represented in Parliament. Reform Bills are quite useless. We are still at the mercy of the aristocracy, and if the fools go on as they are doing they will ruin the country."—"What *are* they doing?" asked Jamie.—"Nothing. That's the point."—"Very well then. John is coming home with a head bursting with political ideas. He'll put things right for you."—"John? What can *he* do?"—"He's coming home with a fortune."—"What?"

Tom sat down heavily. Jamie and Margaret had a splendid moment. Very deliberately and with a nice picking of his words he set forth the nature of John's achievement in the manipulation of corrugated-iron sheets for the building of huts in the new Australian gold-fields. Tom sat pondering it and at last he scratched his head in approval.—"I'll always respect a man who knows his opportunity. But he's a fool to come home. He can't have exhausted it."—"Perhaps," said Jamie, "having tasted gold-rush profits he cannot stomach those of ordinary trade."—"Aye," said Thomas. "It does need a strong stomach to do that. When I think of the business that old Andrew had——" He bit his lip.

"If he's on his way," said Margaret, "how long will it be before his return?"—"Sailing vessel?" asked Tom, and Jamie nodded.—"Three months, at least."

They fell then to making plans for John. He could have a house just outside Thrigsby, if his lungs were no better and he could easily find a use for his capital. Margaret returned to her old charge and hinted at a partnership in Keith's.—Tom sneered: "Why, John would just laugh at our trade! It isn't capital we want. It's specialisation." He caught Jamie's eye probing into him and his mouth shut on his words like a trap. He never had given himself away to his elder brother and he never would. He could not know that Agnes had given him away in the matter of the Dürers but something in Jamie's mood roused his hostility. This he vented on John and began to rail against his coming home.—"If a man makes money out of a place," he said, "he ought to stay there and give it the benefit of his brains. Colonies are not farms, they are not so many Tom Tiddler's grounds. If we are to be an Empire then we ought to feed not bleed the Colonies. We

lost America because we failed to do that, and as long as we have men going out and playing this trick of John's we shall never construct anything. Fair trade is fair trade but a trick's a trick."—"One would think," said Margaret, "that you were not glad of your brother's success."—"Oh! I'm glad enough. Australia must be a beastly hole and Sophia will be glad to get back."—"To Thrigsby?" asked Jamie.—"Yes," flared Tom, "and what's the matter with Thrigsby? It's been good enough for two generations of Greigs and for many of the best families in Scotland. Oh! I know you sneer at it in your scribbling because it isn't an Edinburgh or a London with their artistic and literary fops and society fallals. But we're honest hard-working home-loving men and don't need or look for anything else. We're proud of Thrigsby."—"I'll believe that," said Jamie, "when you clean the river, so that I can fish in it. I should like to retire at forty with a competence and spend my days in the middle of Thrigsby, fishing, and contemplating the meaning of human activity."—Agnes broke into laughter and though Tom looked hurt and puzzled he too was restored to good humour and produced Madeira wine and cake with which to celebrate John's home-coming. More graciously he said: "I do object and I think I have every right to object that you and your people on *The Post* do not give us credit for doing our best."—"The English," said Jamie, "are shirkers and slackers and muddlers. They need perpetual criticism to keep them up to the mark."—"I agree," said Tom, "but not when we are going through a crisis, and I am not an Englishman."—"No," said Margaret, now quite happy that the bite had gone out of the talk. "In all Scotland you will not find anybody so Scottish."—"Well," said Tom, "if it makes you happy, mother, there is no more to be said,

and John will now be able to pay his share of the pension money."

Agnes took Margaret away to see some silks she had bought in France. The brothers sat for some time in silence, each sipping his Madeira. At last Jamie said: "This reminds me of old days at Clibran. And you are wonderfully like old Andrew."—"Do you think so?" asked Tom, flattered and warmed by having one of his private convictions confirmed.—"Wonderfully like. I'm thinking of selling Clibran."—"Why? The time hasn't come yet."—"I'm sick of having it eating its head off and a garden run wild is enough to make angels weep."—"I thought you poet fellows believed in Nature."—"Only through human nature. I'm going to sell it."—"In another two years you'll get double the price. Sell the bricks and mortar if you like but hold on to the land."—"No. I shall sell now."—"Then you'll be doing me a disservice."—"How?"—"I bought the farm next to it. The two lots should go together."—"You never told me that."—"It was my business."—"I think you ought to have told me. It affected my property."—"Well, I've told you now. We ought to come to some agreement about it. If that part of the town develops as I think it will it ought to be possible to sell the two together, or we might be able to realise a good ground rent."—"I'd prefer to get rid of it. I hate the place."—"I think you're a fool."—"Maybe, but I want to get rid of it."—"Will you sell it to me?"—"I don't care about doing business with relations. It always leads to quarrels."—"But there'll be no room for quarrels. We can have a valuation by an agreed surveyor."—"No. I won't sell it to you, Tom."—"Will you sell it to Agnes?"—The quick turn so amused Jamie and he was so pleased with the comic spectacle of Tom in action, really alive

and keen and full of enthusiasm and for once in a way forgetting himself, that he consented to sell Clibran Hall to Agnes, and said that he would take fifteen hundred for it. Tom brushed that aside and insisted on a valuation.—"Eh, man," he cried, "you're a fool. Another two years would treble the value of it. And think of the value in your sons' time. Think of leaving them to be ground landlords in Thrigsby. That's how the Greigs are what they are. They've half Queen Street and two-thirds of Sowgate, in addition to the business." —But Jamie thought of Mr. Wilcox and the dreams that generous simpleton had been weaving on the strength of his promise to find money for the theatre, and the dreams of Mr. Wilcox seemed to him to be more valuable than all the security of the Greigs as they slumbered away their lives in the lovely valley they had spoiled with their houses. He could imagine the little ugly man who had never in his life earned five pounds a week glowing at the thought of spending hundreds in the hope of giving others pleasure. And the dreams of Mr. Wilcox were his own. He had pointed the way, hardly believing that it could ever be open until his friend, the first he had ever made in Thrigsby, had walked down it. He could not fail Mr. Wilcox. He agreed to Tom's proposal.

When Agnes came down Jamie informed her that he had sold her a house as an investment for her children's children.—"Clibran?" asked Margaret, and Jamie explained that Tom had bought the farm next to it and needed the house to round off the property.—"I'll have the farm conveyed to Agnes too," said Tom, now in fine feather. He urged his mother and brother to stay to supper but Jamie refused. He had work to do, he said, and in spite of himself the sight of Tom and Agnes

together oppressed him, and he was glad to be out of the house. He was glad also to be rid of Clibran, the last link that bound him to old Andrew, and curiously it had rid him of Hubert also. He had nothing now to do with either the Keiths or the Greigs except through his mother in whom he liked to think that the best of them was to be found. Now his life was divided between the new glory that was growing in Morley Street and the greater glory which he hoped to find through Mr. Wilcox. He had left Agnes sitting with a basket of wools by the fireplace and Tom, on the other side of it, reaching over for volume C-D of the Encyclopædia, and he thought whimsically that he would recommend Encyclopædia to Mr. Wilcox as a substitute for Mesopotamia.

CHAPTER XXXI

SANCHO WILCOX

THE agreed surveyor valued Clibran Hall at twelve hundred pounds, and that sum Jamie received from Agnes' trustees, less the cost of the conveyance which they had had prepared by their lawyer. It was a long business, but Jamie went straight to Mr. Wilcox and promised that for six months he would guarantee at least one hundred pounds a month for any venture to be entered upon at the theatre. Such wealth seemed fabulous to that worthy. He would at last have a say in the management. He would have only to breathe the words "One hundred a month," and all his dreams would come true. There would be crowded and enthusiastic audiences every night: there would be no more slipshod and listless acting; and every day there would be energetic keen rehearsals with everybody word-perfect and nobody jealous of anybody else, and he himself would be allowed to play Tony Lumpkin in *She Stoops to Conquer* instead of Old Hardcastle to whom he had always been condemned. He could hardly contain his eager happiness and almost every day came round to the bank, as Jamie was leaving, with new suggestions and ideas. He harked back to his old plan of a prologue and one night in an ecstasy he proposed that Jamie himself should play Hamlet.—"Shave that beard," he said, "though

there's nothing to show that Hamlet didn't have a beard. It's the face; it's the moody Dane to a T. Now, why do men fail with Hamlet? Because it needs more than acting. It needs the heaven-searching brain. Actors as a rule don't have that. I haven't got it. You've got it. You had it when you were a boy. Acting by itself is all right for Macbeth or Othello, which play themselves, but there's more in Hamlet. You can't let fly at Hamlet. That's where you would come in, for you don't let fly at anything, but you feel it just the same. Whenever I do a bit of Hamlet, just for the words, I say to myself that's young James Lawrie all over. Get him out of his office clothes, shave that beard, put a skull into his hands and there you are."—So saying he lifted up a tobacco jar from the mantelshelf, seized the red and black tablecloth and flung it round Jamie's shoulders. Then he himself retired behind the great horsehair arm-chair and became the gravedigger:—"'Cudgel thy brains no more about it, for your dull ass will not mend his pace with beating; and, when you are asked this question next, say, a gravemaker: the houses that he makes, last till doomsday.' Now I've thrown up the skull. You go on."—And Jamie took up his part: "That skull had a tongue in it, and could sing once: how the knave jowls it to the ground, as if it were Cain's jawbone, that did the first murder!" And so on they took it to the end of the scene, Mr. Wilcox when necessary becoming Horatio. He was loud in his applause.—"You must do it. Promise me, you'll do it. For there never was, there never could be such a Hamlet. I tell you it made my back open and shut to hear you. If it had been the Ghost scene! Will you do the Ghost scene now? I can be the Ghost and talk into a jug."—Jamie dared not laugh, for fear of spoiling the comedian's

pleasure.—"No, no," he said, "we've had enough."—"If you did the Ghost scene you would be terror itself, and the audience will say, what are all our little fears to the terror of so brave a man."—"I think not," said Jamie, "the audience would say this fellow can't act for toffee, and they'd go out of the theatre. What is acting to you and me here in this little room would be lost in the great theatre. Believe me, it would need an art that I don't possess."—"But, but," cried Mr. Wilcox, now very chap-fallen, "it's the real thing, and you've always said an audience must recognise the real thing when it is put before them."—"Yes," said Jamie, "but it must be given flesh and shape. The actor must make no movement that is not effective to his purpose, he must use no tone of his voice that does not contribute to the rhythm of his scene."—"But if you know all this!"—"My good friend," said Jamie, "I only know enough to tell when other people are wrong. That does not mean that I can do the thing right myself. The one thing, I assure you, that you do not want in your theatre is the amateur."—"Then we shall have to open with a comedy," said Mr. Wilcox, "for we have no tragedian since Henry Acomb went to London."—"There is no money in tragedy," answered Jamie. "I doubt if Thrigsby, as it is now, would listen to Siddons if she came. Let it be comedy, and, if comedy fails, try farce. If farce fails then I'll write you a satire and that will be the end of us."—"The end of us!" Mr. Wilcox's blood was up and he would not hear of that.—"There is a beginning and an end of everything," said Jamie, "and nothing is permanent and it seems folly to me to ignore that."—"When you talk like that," observed Mr. Wilcox, "I feel that there is nothing left for me to do but to put my head in a bag and drown myself."—"And yet," re-

plied Jamie, "it is only when I talk like that that I have any confidence in myself or any power to endure—what I have to endure."

Mr. Wilcox asked for an advance of ten pounds and then for six days he disappeared. On the seventh day he returned with a bill written out on the fly-leaf of a play-book showing how he had expended the money:

By railway fares	£4 13 4
By victuals	1 3 0
By 1 pr. boots having worn out one pr. in walking from Matlock to Derby . .	0 15 0
By postage	0 1 6
By engaging one tragedian, one serio-comic, and one juvenile lead and advancing travelling expenses to same . . .	3 0 0
	£9 12 10

And he pressed into Jamie's hand seven shillings and twopence.—"But you needn't account for every penny," said Jamie.—"Indeed I must," replied Mr. Wilcox. "It must all be in order, indeed it must. I was doubtful about the boots but as they were worn out in the search for talent and I could not go on without boots I thought it best to get a pair and account for them."—"But you have been a week out of work."—"What's a week out of work to an actor?" said Mr. Wilcox. "Nothing. And I'm fortunate. Being local I can always fill out with concerts and readings."

He had made his arrangements with the management, who, being in a lean period, were only too glad, if possible, to do without the travelling "stars" who demanded so exorbitant a share of whatever the profits might be,

in addition to their guarantee. They had no difficulty in hoodwinking Mr. Wilcox who imagined that they shared his enthusiasm and were all for making the theatre worthy of Thrigsby, and in time Thrigsby worthy of the theatre, that is the theatre of Mr. Wilcox's imagination, where it was as a shining citadel so brilliant that all else became invisible, and all men turned to it and only lived through the day that in the evening they might pay their five shillings and half-crowns and shillings and have their sides shaken with laughter and their eyes salted with tears. He asked no other profit. His heaven was to be in front of a good audience and he imagined that James Lawrie had showed him the way to it. Therefore he was eternally grateful and could not conceive that his friend existed for any other purpose than to receive his gratitude and to share his heaven when it was won. He was like a woman in love, allowing the whole world and all life to be blotted out by the treasure that he had the illusion of holding in his hands. And like a woman in love he sought a jealous possession of the person from whom his treasure seemed to have come. Often he caused Jamie to feel that he was betraying his friend and his friend's happiness. He simply could not rise to the heated exaltation that possessed Mr. Wilcox. All he hoped for was that in the experiment the theatre might be lifted a little from the low level it had reached. In solitary and philosophic moments he did sometimes dream vaguely and painfully of a regeneration of Thrigsby through art, but, soberly, when he went about his business, he was forced to confess that Thrigsby, articulate Thrigsby, saw no necessity for any regeneration, and found so much satisfaction in its functions as a trading centre that it hardly ever required to be amused. He was still rather vague in his

mind and could not clearly associate poetry with experience. Poets were to him beings almost as far above humanity as the angels. They had, so he imagined, some extra source of vitality given to them for the production of verses, through which those who had the power to respond could escape the tyranny of the crowding monotonous days. He was no poet himself. Had he been one he would not have stayed more or less contented in the bank while Mr. Rigby Blair turned it from the instrument of an efficient man into a machine efficient in itself. On the other hand it pleased him to take money out of the bank and give it to Mr. Wilcox to whom, for its own sake, it was entirely valueless. He felt that in so doing he was putting the bank in its place in his mind and not allowing it to absorb more of his energy than was absolutely essential to it. Yet he was not satisfied. The Wilcox transaction had added to his discomfort in one way though it had relieved him in another. He could never be morally comfortable without his mind working on his condition, not always, of course, to good purpose, and more than once he came very near to realisation of the truth that he was attempting the impossible, to buy his freedom.

He found that when this new unhappiness was upon him he liked to be near his mother. Her serenity was very healing to him. He knew her to be as proud as himself, and stronger, as sensitive and as obstinate in struggling with anything that menaced her serenity. Yet she could more easily recover it than he. He tried to talk to her about it to discover the nature of that ordered universe in which she dwelt so securely. He talked to her of death and of good work she had done for a friend of hers whose life had been most miserable, to end in the failure of a beloved son and poverty in-

curred through his wicked recklessness. He found that she believed absolutely in a future life: that the woman and her son would eventually be united in perfect love; that the woman would wait by the gates of heaven through the age-long torment of her body until sin in forgiveness ceased to be and all would be united with those whom they had loved.—"Tom and Agnes?" asked Jamie.—"Tom and Agnes, but the curse of Eve will be removed and there will be neither marriage nor giving in marriage."—"John and Sophia?"—"John and Sophia, of course. All those who have loved each other."—It was almost pictorial to her, but to him it meant nothing. It seemed so completely to ignore this world in which for good or ill he was living. But he could understand and rejoice most profoundly in the wonderful love that suffused her picture and gave a certain majesty to its ugly ruggedness and coldness. It was a good logical conception, but he could not accept its logic, for its premiss, the postponement of love, was foreign to him and impossible as a postulate for the business of living. If love were postponed then Thrigsby was right, Tom was right, and a man must obey the dictate of circumstances and seek neither to transcend nor to amend them.—Here however there was a discrepancy. Tom had not his mother's faith. He did not merely postpone the active principle of love but absolutely ignored it. To Margaret life was inevitably tragic; to Tom it was, as to ancient Pistol, an oyster to be pried open: gulp down the little morsel of jelly and throw the shells away. To Jamie it was alternately beautiful and comic, and more often the latter, and as he grew older the comic became more unbearable and drove him into the desire for more beauty. On the other hand, being excessively sensitive and lacking the kind of experience which toughens the

moral fibres, in the presence of beauty he was over-modest and shy and rather preferred the hint of it to its full flowering. Possibly the climate of Thrigsby had a good deal to do with it. The mists of England cause all things to appear in the most questionable shapes, which, reacting upon the minds of those who live among them, produce the oddest effects of character, and, most often, a very touching timidity in the face of an emotion. That may or may not have been the cause of James Lawrie's growing inability to do what was expected of him and even what he expected of himself. He could never put his finger on any valid reason for his objection to Tom and Tom's ways. There, outwardly, was all that a man can desire, comfort, ease, independence, a handsome, accomplished, dutiful and wealthy wife, the respect of his fellow-citizens both on week days and Sundays. At best he could only tell himself that it was because Tom had become so perfectly Thrigsbeian and that Thrigsby was wrong: exactly how he did not know, but he knew it. The bank was very typical of Thrigsby and the bank was wrong, for it was the collective product of a number of minds over which no single mind had any genuine power. A good machine you can start and you can stop: but there was no stopping the bank. It simply swallowed up money and human life. It was really very like the machinery of Margaret's religion, which also swallowed up money and human life in order to create a strange empty world from which all good had been postponed. Everyone else accepted this affair cheerfully and quite blandly the Thrigsbeians treated each other abominably: Margaret, for instance, in spite of her belief in a future love was quite content to stifle the life out of Tibby and to leave her for days without a smile or a kindly word; and so the Toms

and the Greigs were quite happy to take their comfort out of Thrigsby and to allow its slums like a dirty flood to swell out all over the city. Jamie did not so much know better, as know that Shakespeare and Spenser and Shelley and Keats and William Blake knew better, and, being of a natural indolence and unpractical, he was quite content to take their word for it and to relieve himself in mild satire in *The Weekly Post* and in the encouragement of Mr. Wilcox, whom, fundamentally, he admired because he had had the courage to abandon Keith's for the sake of the thing he believed.

Jamie had to work very hard during those summer months. Mr. Wilcox was not going to let him off. He had to write articles about the modern industrial city and the theatre and the disadvantages of the "star" system; he had to write about Shakespearean and English comedy: he had to write about the great tradition of English acting, unbroken from Betterton down to the nineteenth century, when, with so much else, it had been engulfed. He had to interview actors and approve them and he had to arbitrate in squabbles between Mr. Wilcox and the management, and also to extricate Mr. Wilcox from the financial bogs into which he kept floundering.

At first Jamie was rather tepid in all he did. In his writing he borrowed wholesale from Hazlitt, and Mr. Wilcox's difficulties were so comic as to seem unimportant. But gradually he warmed to his task and became conscious of a release of energy. His thoughts no longer were so exasperatingly separate from his existence, and he could control them better, extract more from them. He became more hopeful and almost visionary. In his sanguine dreams he exceeded his colleague in his idea of what the theatre was going to do for

Thrigsby. It should not only provide them with more and finer amusement than any they had ever known, but it should make them think. As Jamie in his innocence imagined it, that was a perfectly painless process. The Thrigsbeians had but to love the dramatic fare set before them and at once they would begin to use their brains, not only upon their daily tasks but upon life beyond them. So great would this new delight be to them that they would detest all that had previously kept it from them. They would abhor their little round of excessive business. They would say: "This new joy has come out of life. There must be more, boundless stores of it, if we could but release it."

All this enthusiastic work went to Jamie's head and he had a fine period of intoxication. He was himself to a certain extent regenerate. He had known nothing like it since Selina and enjoyed this more because he was more free. The routine of the bank carried him through the day and at five o'clock he came wonderfully to life. He felt irresistible and was so to a certain extent. His energy carried him into the newspaper offices to win the support of the editors who all wanted to know what names he had behind him. He had thought Shakespeare's and Goldsmith's and Sheridan's good enough but they wanted local names. Therefore he procured a Greig or two, and an ex-Mayor, the Town Clerk and the principal of Grime's College. Armed with these he procured promise of support, but then found that he had to earn these names. The ex-Mayor wanted to figure in Quintus Flumen's series of Thrigsby worthies: the principal of Grime's College wanted a lecture on the drama: and the Town Clerk wished to be admitted behind the scenes. All these commercial transactions rather sullied the purity of the reformer's ardour but he

went through with them, wrote satirically of the ex-Mayor, gave a very bad and incoherent lecture, and took the Town Clerk behind the scenes and let him talk to the wardrobe mistress, who did not in the least mind being treated as though she kept a bagnio.

Outside the theatre both Jamie and his henchman were consumed with a fever. Once inside it they were swept up into a blissful dream. They were like gods filling the void of chaos, but, unlike gods, they were driven on by some purpose greater than themselves. There was magic in their fingers; difficulties and quarrels disappeared before them. Where Mr. Wilcox saw a difficulty Jamie could not see it, and at once it would disappear for Mr. Wilcox.—"We can't have that tattered old flat," Mr. Wilcox would say.—"It is the very thing," Jamie would reply.—"When the light is on it of course it will look different." And at once Mr. Wilcox would forget about it.—When they were near a quarrel they would make desperate haste to agree, and at once the cause of the quarrel would fade away and be forgotten. They would sit for hours in the dark auditorium having the light turned up and down, until the management asked them if they knew they were doubling the gas-bill. Then they played with the scenery and the wardrobe, and that game cost Jamie nearly one hundred and fifty pounds. But his blood was up and he would not count the cost. The theatre must be made worthy of the wonders that the New Company was to bring to birth in it. So fascinating, so intoxicating was this fingering of the machinery of the theatre that it was often one or two in the morning before he got home and Margaret more than half convinced herself that he had taken to wild courses, save that he never smelled of whisky, nor had his complexion taken on the queer floury

tone induced by debauchery. He was wonderfully fresh and eager: so eager that when it came to actual work in the theatre and others than Mr. Wilcox had to be admitted he felt rather dashed and hopeless. Rehearsals were a torment. The actors simply could not speak their lines with any sense of the value of words. They were indifferent to words and would substitute for Shakespeare's noble prose trite banalities of their own. They seemed to Jamie to be doing it on purpose. As a critic he had rarely noticed such substitutions, being far too much absorbed in the emotional structure of the play. But now watching the actors in their ordinary clothes and being no longer a mere spectator but an essential part of the organism he was labouring to create, every slip, every distortion hurt him as an abomination, and he would curse and swear under his breath, but never dared do more than mildly and sarcastically suggest the value of accuracy, for the actors always treated him as an intruder and made him feel very small indeed.—"Sir," an old man once said to him, "I have been on the boards thirty years and if there is a laugh in a line I can get it."—"Fool!" said Jamie under his breath, "there's a pleasure and a beauty in words themselves. Who wants to laugh while he is tasting that?"

Fortunately the actors would listen to Mr. Wilcox as one of themselves and he was able to expunge some of their enormities, but they shattered Jamie's dreams, and he soon saw that the New Company was simply the old writ large and that Thrigsby had and would continue to have the theatre it deserved. Further he saw that for a man engaged in its commerce to attempt in his spare time to give it better was little short of impudence. The task was Herculean and made him almost desperate

with unhappiness. If it was worth doing it was worth doing wholly and that for him was impossible. An essential part of his personality remained outside the work, being pledged to the ambitions of his family. He knew that if, as was necessary for the work he had undertaken, he became a vagabond, the idea of Tom's triumphant "I told you so" would paralyse him. More than that, he admitted that Tom was not the real obstacle so much as his own liking for respectability. The duality of his existence was beginning to tell upon him and he had appalling moments when he lost all sense of his own reality, even the physical appreciation of the fact of living. Food lost its taste, flowers their scent, the sky its colour, and the end of it was a miserable liaison with a young woman of the theatre who tortured him for a month, at the end of which time he gave her money and sent her to London.

How he hated himself after that! He crawled back into self-realisation again to discover what looked to him like utter ruin, round which with idiotic insistence his normal life went on. Knowing that he had failed Mr. Wilcox, yet he could not desert him and worked harder than ever, writing, lecturing, attending rehearsals, making up programmes and circulars, and himself doing much of the clerical work of sending out invitations to the first performance.

The dress rehearsal comforted him somewhat. He got back into his old place in the stalls and viewed the performance critically, rolling the flavour of it round his tongue. Not so bad! Certainly a better performance of a Shakespearean comedy than had been seen in a Thrigsby theatre in his time. Mr. Wilcox as Dogberry was nobly absurd; but the Beatrice! Great Cæsar! Where on earth was such a woman dug up? She had

the humour of a cook and the diction of a prima donna. Jamie's fingers itched to write the notice of the performance. How he would strip the woman of her pretensions. He determined that, if things were no better at the first performance, he would write a notice in *The Post*. His humour began to assert itself and he felt better.

CHAPTER XXXII

MRS. LESLIE IN DISTRESS

THERE was a good audience. In those days it was part of the fun of going to the theatre, if you went in the pit, to stand for an hour or two jammed in a crowd, which, when the doors were opened, moved in a flood and poured through the narrow aperture. Jamie went and stood for an hour in the crowd and found it wonderfully stimulating to be pressed and jostled, to feel rough human contact, to smell warm human bodies. How good they were, how genuine and solid after the shadows with which he had been dealing: the shadows of the theatre, the shadows of his own thoughts, the shadows of the small affections with which he had imagined his life to be filled! How robust they all seemed, and how humorous in their appetite for pleasure! They jeered at the New Company: hardly a name in it they had ever heard of. There were enthusiastic playgoers who could remember the great actors of two generations. They were contemptuous of this new way of doing things and Jamie heard himself described as: "some young swell who fancies himself and doesn't know what to do with his money." He agreed, and was more pleased when they went on: "Quintus Flumen will have a word to say to this!" and longed to reveal himself as Quintus. They went on to discuss the critic, but he

could not stay, for he had Tibby and Agnes coming to sit with him in his box. Tibby had forced him to confess what he was up to and had been very sad about it, for she had thought he was done with the "play-acting and all that," and she had told Agnes, who was her friend and very good to her, often inviting her to her house for the pleasure of her shrewd talk and the benefit of her knowledge of Tom's character. Tibby had not said much about Jamie's nefarious activities but she had persuaded Agnes to go with her and Agnes had tried, in vain, to induce Tom to join her. He forbade her to go, but she declared that she had promised and must keep her word. Very well then, he would go to bed and would lock the door at eleven and, if she was out later than that, he would know the kind of woman she was. Agnes took the key of the back door and told her cook to see that it was left unbolted. She hired a fly, called for Tibby and found Jamie waiting for them under the portico of the theatre. As they passed into the vestibule they met Hubert, grown very fat and brown.—"I couldn't stay away from this," said he. "Too much like my own youth come to life again."—Jamie wondered how far he was really like Hubert, and hated the idea. Agnes was very glad to see her cousin, explained to him who Tibby was, and invited him to sit with them.—"I knew your father," said Hubert to Tibby and set himself to be very pleasant to her. Tibby said: "Jamie was the only one my father was anxious about."—"People have always been anxious about me," chuckled Hubert, "and I am the only one of the Greigs who has done any good. I've won three medals with my fat stock. And how do you like being married, Agnes? The Greigs don't take kindly to it as a rule. They resent any infusion of a new strain."—"I'm very happy," said Ag-

nes.—Jamie pricked up his ears. Her words carried conviction even to his jealousy.

When they reached the box Hubert and Agnes sat in front, Jamie and Tibby behind. Hubert looked round the house, and nodded at acquaintances.—"You've papered the house well, James," he said, "though I'd like to have seen a few more pillars of virtue, a little more of the cream of Thrigsby. This is only the skim. A fatal mistake, for even if it is a success you won't get the cream, the real *flor de* Thrigsby. They like to be in everything from the beginning."—"The cream of an audience," said Jamie, "is always in the pit and the gallery."—"But they won't keep you going. Please your pit and gallery by all means; but this is England, and if you wish to keep your head above water you must go for the snobs."—"I'd rather drown," retorted Jamie.—"Then you certainly will," said Hubert gaily, "unless you can persuade Thrigsby that you are a genius. Nobody has ever succeeded in doing that except by going to London and being successful there."—Jamie shrank away to the back of the box. Hubert withered even the little pleasure that was left in him.

The curtain rose and Hubert ceased his chatter. He loved the theatre and had long ago given up being critical. He praised the scenery and leaned back in his chair to compliment his cousin on the dresses. Then he sank back into enjoyment. To Jamie's horror the Beatrice was immediately successful, She walked right out of the play and laboured to make a personal effect and made it. She produced ripples of laughter while she was on the stage and applause when she left it. She was so comic that poor Mr. Wilcox as Dogberry had no shine left in him. He was listened to as though he were a melancholy interlude, and his really capital per-

formance won small recognition. Jamie in his box grew gloomier and gloomier. The loud applause at the end of each act had no power to reassure him. He was absolutely convinced that he had laboured in vain and it only irritated him when Agnes and Tibby excitedly expressed their pleasure. They ought not to have been pleased, and at least they ought to have known that they were being pleased in the old, old way, trickily and with the grossest personal appeals. Shakespeare's comedy as now presented was really no different from the annual pantomime. It ought to have ended with a transformation scene with Beatrice revealed in the end as the Queen of the Mermaids, or of the Night, or as the Mother of Nations. How could people laugh at her, and not feel shamefully that they ought to be laughing with her?

During the Church scene Tibby was excited to recognise in one of the ladies little Fanny Shaw dressed up in long skirts, with her hair up, looking like a doll.—"What a shame," she cried.—"What's a shame?" whispered Jamie, glad to be diverted from the performance. —"That poor child," answered Tibby, "dressed up like a little old woman. I declare it makes me feel ashamed." —"She's very happy doing it and in some ways she is older than you or I, Tibby."—"It's made me feel," said she, "that I hate all this mummery."—"So do I," muttered Jamie fiercely, "all mummery whatsoever. But come behind the scenes and see what it is made of."

In the next interval they went behind and sought out Fanny, who was, as Jamie had said, very happy, half in, half out of the play and deep in the sorrows of Hero and Claudio, also full of the general excitement over the apparent success. Mr. Wilcox had heard of Jamie's coming round and he rushed in in his paint and

gaberdine, holding his wig and hat in his hands:—"Me boy!" he said, "me boy! I always said from the first that you were a mascot, and here's our luck at last. She's playing with them, me boy. She has but to lift her little finger and they laugh. Why, they laugh so much they they only smile at me, and, after all, the play *is* Beatrice, ain't it?"—"It is," said Jamie aghast at this tragic end to all his hopes of Mr. Wilcox, "the play is Beatrice, and nothing else. I should like to see what she would do with Hamlet."—"Women have played the Prince," said Mr. Wilcox, "but she's a comedy queen, and she's fifty-four if she's a day. She's a marvel."—"Fifty-four?" cried Tibby in amazement. "I would have called her a plump thirty."—"Fifty-four," said Mr. Wilcox, "and she cost me a pair of boots. Shall I see you afterwards, Quint?"—"I think not," said Jamie. "I have my sister-in-law with me."

While Jamie and Tibby were away Agnes seized the opportunity to tackle Hubert.—"Don't you think it's a pity?" she asked.—"What?"—"That Jamie should throw himself away on this kind of thing?"—"Why not? He must throw himself away on something."—"Why?"—"Because he's generous and the rest of us are not."—"But the theatre?"—"It is a will-o'-the-wisp that leads nowhere. Jamie is the kind of man who must run after a will-o'-the-wisp, and another might lead him into a bog."—"Do you think him a genius? He is certainly very odd."—"I think he might have been a genius if he had been born into any other family."—"Why not in ours?"—"Because it is strong and believes in nothing but safety."—"Then he must be very unhappy."—"Dearest Agnes," said Hubert, "which of us is happy?"—"I mean, he could be happier than most of us."—"But as things are he won't be and the best thing you

can do for him is to find him a wife, get him away from that old mother of his, and let him breed."—Agnes blushed and hid her face in her fan. She was used to Hubert's excesses and knew how to flatter him. He was pleased and went on: "It isn't the least use being ashamed of the breeding instinct. I used to jeer at it but in the end I had to satisfy it by farming and even now I feel rather mean at getting pigs, horses, cattle and poultry to do for me what I ought to have done for myself."—"But Jamie has so much imagination."—"Certainly, and it wants its food, which in a family like ours it does not get. His has been starved and is not strong enough for the kind of work he is trying to make it do. That is why I say he is not a genius. He would have got away years ago if he had been."—"It seems very dreadful."—"It is very dreadful," said Hubert, "but the family has its uses and cannot take overmuch account of the individual. In the long run the individual will have his revenge."—"Weren't you yourself in revolt against the family?"—"O yes. I rammed my head against the brick wall and was maimed for life. Jamie is quite merciless. He hates me worse even than the family. He thinks I don't believe in him, and I don't."—"Why not?"—"From my own experience. If he thinks the family, as all institutions do, has become a tyrant he ought not to compromise over it."—"It is difficult to see what else he could do."—"Exactly, and a genius would not see any difficulty."—Agnes smiled and said: "I think you are unfair to him because he has seen through you, Hubert. I think he sees so clearly that a very little action is all he needs. I believe he is a genius because he is so like a child and asks nothing at all but that people should be kind to him. Tom says he is conceited, but he is the humblest creature I ever

met and I am very fond of him, as well as sorry for him, and this kind of thing seems to me wrong because anybody else could do it as well."

Tibby returned then, saying that Jamie would stay behind for the rest of the performance. "He's perfectly miserable," she said, "and I would like to take him home."—"Why is he miserable?" asked Agnes.—"He would not say. Indeed he said nothing, Mrs. Tom, but I know him. He cannot take his pleasure like other folk. You'd think, as he sat here so glum, it was a tragedy on the stage, and he used strong language in the Church scene. You'd think he hated the players from the way he went on and yet, as I've told you, he cannot keep away from them."—"Does he do any writing now?" asked Hubert.—"Only what you see in the papers and every now and then a little poetry, which he tears up."—"The fact of the matter is," said Hubert, "our James is an intellectual without intelligence and he should have been a professor."—"He is the best of men," said Tibby, "and if he were a gaol-bird he would be the best of men, for that's the kind of man he is."

At the end of the play there was great applause, which however did not last very long. There was nobody in it and Hubert grunted dubiously.—"You don't think it will be popular?" asked Agnes. Hubert grunted again.—"Big snobs and little snobs," he said. "It's no good. You can't get on without them. There's no such thing as spontaneous success. It must be to a certain extent automatic. Even with the snobs I doubt it. The Beatrice is a clever-farceuse but she is too old."—"I hope Jamie won't be disappointed but I must say I am glad it is not a success."—"And I," said Tibby, "thank God for it."—Hubert laughed: "You think there is nothing to be said for these harlotry players?"

They waited for Jamie until the theatre was quite empty, but he was already at home in a frenzy writing his notice of the performance of *Much Ado About Nothing,* words which had taken on a dreadful significance for him. He began by telling the story of the play and then explained that he had had to turn to the book to discover what it was, since the performance had left him in some doubt. Then he went on to show what dignity he had found in the printed page, what wit, what raillery, what splendour of diction, and how on the stage he had seen a rude farce, for the justification of which he had looked in vain.—"If I could have forgotten my Shakespeare I might have enjoyed a splendid performance, but I could not forget my Shakespeare, nor could I consent to his work being presented to those who have not read it in so debased a form. They may like it so but no critic worth the name can approve their liking it, or suffer it without protest." As he wrote on he forgot that he had had anything to do with the production and praised what there was to praise, the greater care that had been given to the scenery, dresses, lighting and production. He praised Mr. Wilcox and the Don John and the Benedick, whom he commiserated on having the wit of his part bludgeoned out of existence by the Beatrice with her rolling-pin, who cooked her jokes like jam-tarts and hawked them two a penny.

He had not for a long time written so easily or so clearly. He had neither confusion nor doubt as to his meaning. It was the old gusto again and he felt considerable satisfaction in signing it Quintus Flumen. Then it must be sent off at once to *The Post* office in time to have a proof. He packed it up and sent it off and returned just as Tibby was descending at the gate from Agnes' fly.—"Thank you very much, Jamie," said

Agnes. "It was a most entertaining evening. But I hope you didn't run away from Hubert. He is really very fond of you."—"No, my dear," said Jamie. "I ran away from the play."—"Your own play? I think you ought to stand up for your own."—"Even if it is abominable?"—"It's too late to argue now. Will you come and see me soon?"—"I will very soon. I've been a little afraid of you."—"You need never be that. Good-night."—"Good-night."

Tibby was very stern with him.—"Where have you been?" she asked.—"To the post. I—I wanted a little air."—"Why do you go among the players, if you hate them so much, Jamie?"—"It isn't the players. It's the theatre. It gets into my blood. I'm full of it, always expecting something from it." He was very excited and she commented on it: "You're not yourself to-night, Jamie."—"No," he said, "I think I've been over-doing it. I'm not myself and that's the fact. There'll be no sleep for me for hours and I'd be pleased if you'd come and talk to me; none of your shy hovering at the door but a real sit-down talk."—Tibby followed him up to his room. They listened outside Margaret's door but there was no sound.

Jamie lit the lamp and suggested that they should have tea. Tibby stole downstairs to the kitchen and came back with two cups.—"That's good!" said Jamie. "Do you think I'm a terrible fool, Tibby?"—"I have no decided opinion about you," said she, "but I have my hopes."—"That I'll be a fool?"—"No. That you'll be as good a man as your mother."—"Aye, she is fine, and I must be a sore trial to her."—"Nay. She's pleased now to think of you in the bank."—"Ah! That's it, Tibby. That's where I'm the fool, to want the theatre to be as good for its work as the bank."—"You'll never get

that."—"Why not?"—"Because play-acting's an off-time thing."—"Not for the people whose work it is."—"They've got to take the mood of the people they have to do their tricks before, and they're all tired people."—"But they ought not to be tired."—"And yet they are. It's been an easy thing for you to get your living, Jamie, though I will say that I never knew you take things easily, but for most of us living is hard. We're not all happy in ourselves as you are mostly in yourself, and we shrink from any little extra suffering or from any extra effort."—Jamie thought that over for awhile. There seemed to him to be some truth in it and he asked: "Are you speaking for yourself, or only from what you think?"—"It's true of me too," said Tibby. "I often think you never realise what other people are going through because you go through things so quickly yourself. We can't. We're slow and helpless."—"You're not slow, Tibby. My mind never jumps so fast but you are there before me and I must say this of you that you never leave anything behind. Very often I move so fast—in my mind, I mean, and my feelings—that I seem to leave everything behind and to forget not only what men are doing but what they are. It's an amazing freedom that I get there, but I can do nothing with it and I have to come back wearily. And yet always when I do come back to things as they go slowly grinding on I know that I simply cannot live among them. I wonder sometimes if I am wicked, but if I were wicked I couldn't be sitting here talking to you as I am now. All I feel is that everything is too close here in this place; people are too close to each other, and yet what worlds away! our ideas are too close: God, the kind of God my mother still believes in, is too close. I feel that we're fast losing something, some idea maybe, or some power

of communication one with another. It means more to me, I know, to see you or to feel your presence in a room than to talk to any other living soul. There's life in that——"—"Oh! Jamie! Oh! Jamie!" cried Tibby, and he felt a strange tingling and throbbing in his breast. She was trembling.—"Tibby," he said, "for God's sake what is it? Have I hurt you? Have I been talking blethers?"—She had risen from her chair and she stood looking down at him, her curious veiled eyes shining.—"You *are* a fool, Jamie," she said. "Much thinking has made you a fool and may God forgive you."—He stood and confronted her:—"Tibby!" he said. "Tell me what it is. Tell me, for I'm sick to death of being the kind of fool I am."—"It would harm us both if I told you," said she, "so I'll haud my tongue. I'm used to that."

So saying, she left him and he sank back into his chair with the tingling and throbbing in his breast turned to a dull ache. For an hour or more he sat blankly staring in front of him. He was not insensible of the torment in Tibby but he was numbed by the stab of the fierce instinct in her, and mentally confused by the tenderness in her which had not for a moment failed him. And suddenly he was the victim of a violent eruption of feeling, that seemed to have no object but to destroy his being. It was an agony but he shrank from no moment of it, feeling all the dissatisfactions of years being rent from him. He was left with small immediate consciousness. Suppressed desires, distorted and abused desires came up in a vile flood thrusting their way through the shell of his being, darkening his mind, freezing his heart. He could find no relief but in moving slowly about the room. It was a comfort and a reassurance to touch things, the curtains. Many times he pulled the blinds up and down. He extinguished

the lamp, lit it again and once more extinguished it. He broke a heavy ivory paper-knife into five pieces and cut his hand in doing so. At last dawn came and he stood at the window watching the coming of the light from grey to pearl and pearl to red in the sky, noting the changes with a cold exactness and precision until at last another day enormous and abominably empty had begun. It was the vastness and emptiness of the day that Jamie felt. It must be filled and his mind began to cast about for his means of filling it: breakfast, work at the bank, dinner, work at the bank, tea, conversation with his mother. He went into all that in detail and heaped it up but still the day seemed very empty: a sieve of a day. He poured into it all the activities he had ever known, the activities of the thousands in the great city; all his pleasures, all his loves, all his happiness and all his sorrow, and still the day was very empty. At last he shrugged his shoulders and told himself that he had nothing more to cast away and was miraculously still alive. Then he went up to his bed and lay down and slept for a couple of hours, deliberately and consciously put himself to sleep because he needed it, and felt that, as nothing worse could possibly happen, he had the right to so much refreshment.

In the morning there were several letters for him, one from Mrs. Leslie which ran: "My dear Jamie,—For I always shall call you Jamie in spite of what has happened. Will you excuse me asking you to come and see me, but I am in some trouble. Mr. Leslie has been asked to retire from the firm and I don't know whatever we shall do. It isn't as if he was a young man but we can talk of all that when you come, which please do soon, as Mr. Leslie will let no one come to the house and I have no one to talk to."—"Tom's work,"

said Jamie as he read this letter over a second time.—Margaret handed him his coffee, saying: "You're looking very well this morning, Jamie. John writes from Madeira to say that he and Sophia are so enchanted with the place that they will stay there, perhaps until the spring. They are sending me some Madeira lace and I must say that John is very generous. Sophia has been very good for him in that way."—"My letter," said Jamie, "is from Mrs. Leslie. She tells me that her husband has been dismissed from the firm."—"Yes," said Margaret, "it does seem a pity. Tom told me some time since that he would have to go."

CHAPTER XXXIII

ACOMB TO THE RESCUE

THAT evening, when he left the bank, Jamie took the way that he had gone every day when he had first entered his uncle's office. There was no change in the streets but for the worse, yet he no longer resented deterioration; it no longer fretted his nerves. He could face the squalor in the mean streets as he had faced the squalor in himself, and both seemed to him part of the same evil against which it was his clear and joyous duty to fight. In responding to that duty liberty stirred in his heart. That day, as he had lived it, had been full to brimming over, though it had contained nothing that there had not been in countless days before it. It had been like no other day in all his life; not even the wonderful joyous days of his boyhood had been so full. Everyone had responded a little to the zest in him and he had found it so easy to enter into all the little jokes of the bank, though where the others laughed uproariously he could never give more than a dry chuckle. The business of the day had seemed to him more than ever trivial and unduly intricate, excessively slow and indolent, but none the less worth doing well and carefully. It absorbed very little energy and he had plenty of leisure for thinking of other things and for considering the possibility of changes that he

could bring about in his life, so that he could taste more of this new liberty that had come so suddenly as to seem Heaven-sent. It had the very magic of poetry, and it seemed to him that he was feeling as poets feel, with a joy beyond all pleasure, with no thought of pleasure in the free activity of love. He could love even evil, since from the strife of good and evil in himself as in all things came this joy, which forbade nothing and excluded nothing.

He could not resist the temptation to look back on the small, conceited, egoistic and most unhappy self that he had left behind. That self had often tasted the pleasure of feeling virtuous, which was most absurdly like the pleasure of feeling wicked; it had often tasted the delight of an eruption of blind instinct, which it had called passion, impotent and futile, producing nothing in the end but disgust. But now it was as though his instincts had been given sight. They were eager. They poured, thrilling through all his senses, quickening them so that his joy was no more confined within himself but could pass out into all that he could see and touch and smell, withdrawing before all offence or reaching through it to understand it and to know its nature.

As he walked by the old way he could meet his younger self, who had suffered in his unwitting desire for this very thing, this fulness of a day. It was good to be going back to Mrs. Leslie who had done so much to make those old times bearable. It was good to go back with this first fulfilment to the scenes of the innocent young desire.

Mrs. Leslie opened the door to him herself. Trouble? There was no sign of it upon her face, in her ready smile and her child-like eyes that had surely seen no evil anywhere and in all that has passed before them had found

only food for gaiety.—"He! He! Jamie," she said. "It is good of you to come at once."—"Of course I should come at once."—"He! He! I knew you would."

She led him into her little parlour, not, he knew, because he was a ceremonious visitor, but because she wished to have him alone. She said: "I thought I could bear it until Sunday, but when Mr. Leslie refused to go to church then I couldn't bear it any longer. He hasn't missed church on Sunday for fifteen years, not since he's been churchwarden. I wouldn't mind anything. I never did mind anything that happens, for when one door shuts another door opens. I was always a puzzle to Mr. Leslie, being so cheerful, and now he can't understand me at all. He just sits there and won't go out until after dark and if I make a suggestion he snaps my head off. We shall have to leave this house because of the rent but he won't hear a word of it. And at night when I used to get something out of him he just lies silent as the night."—"When did it happen," asked Jamie, "and how?"—"A fortnight ago. They had told him three months before but he never said a word of it to me. He came home a fortnight ago and said the office had no further use for his services. Then it was days before I could get anything more out of him. They have given him his salary up to the end of the year, which is generous considering that they need not have given him anything."—"They'd had his work for thirty years and more."—"Thirty-two years. He was very proud of that, but he can't think of anything else. I can't do anything with him. He says I have never understood him and I thought if you could do something. He used to be fond of you in the old days."—"Will you ask him to see me?"—"I'd rather you went in yourself. I've always found that the only way is to take him by surprise. He! He!

That's why he's so fond of me, because I'm always a surprise to him."

Jamie went along to the dining-room where he found Mr. Leslie sitting in his old easy-chair, cowering before the fire and reading the advertisements in the newspaper column by column. When he saw Jamie he turned over the page to the notice of the production of *Much Ado About Nothing*.—"Good-evening," said Jamie.—"Good-evening," said Mr. Leslie, "and what brings you here?"—"My old friends," replied Jamie, "old friends are best." He winced at once at the tactlessness of his own remark. But it did not seem to wound Mr. Leslie, who was in a bewildered apathy.—"I was thinking of the old days," said Jamie, "and I thought I would come and take you out for a walk. We used to enjoy our walks in the old days."—"I've changed my habits," retorted Mr. Leslie, "I used to enjoy a walk of a Sunday, but all days are Sundays now."—"Then come and enjoy a walk."—"I couldn't."

There was a long and very awkward silence which Jamie at last broke by saying lamely: "I think it would be a good thing." Mr. Leslie had reduced him to impotence and he chafed against it. He felt that if only he could get the wretched man out of doors he would be able to do something with him. Sitting there, he was in a strongly fortified position. The easy-chair was the throne from which he had exercised his sovereign power over his family. He had taken refuge in it now and resented Jamie's suggestion as an attempt to drive him out.—"Come, come," said Jamie. "Let us be friends."—"Not," said Mr. Leslie, "with any member of your family. For thirty years and more I've worked for your family, that your uncle and your brother may live in luxury and that you may waste your life in sinful

courses. You were the ruin of my daughter, James Lawrie, but I believed in the firm. I always have believed in the firm and I find it hard not to believe in the firm now."—Jamie received this onslaught with a gulp. That he had been the ruin of Selina was, from Peter's point of view, true enough, though not at all true from Selina's. However, Peter did not admit that Selina had a point of view, or, indeed, an existence. According to his notions Jamie had put an end to that as surely as Tom had put an end to his connection with the firm. He was completely baffled. Such things do not happen to a churchwarden. The mere fact of being a churchwarden ought to have made them impossible. And yet they had happened and he simply could not understand it. If there were any justice in Heaven, as there was certainly none on earth, the Lawries ought to be struck dead, and for his effrontery in coming to see him, Mr. Leslie half expected the finger of God to touch James Lawrie as he sat by the table in the dining-room.

Jamie could feel the man aching and throbbing with injured vanity and a helpless rage at being deprived of the habits which through so many years had carried him on from day to day. At the same time he realised how entirely inaccessible the unhappy Peter was to any sympathy that might be given him. He had repulsed even his wife. What then could an outsider do? The only thing Jamie could think of was to get him out of the easy-chair.—"I should have thought," he said kindly, "that you would have been glad of your independence." Peter sat bolt upright:—"I have always been independent," he snapped. "That is the trouble. I have been independent in my politics, in my religion, and I have been master in my own house, as you ought to know, having lived here when you were a boy and I did my

best to discharge my responsibility to your uncle, who, if he had been alive, would never have tolerated the things that are being done in his business to-day. I have never asked for help and never will, neither will I brook any interference in my affairs."—"I had no intention of interfering," replied Jamie. "I certainly think you have been treated very badly and I only wished to offer you such help as I can give if you have any intention of finding other work."—"I am quite capable of applying for work when it is wanted." His rage suddenly boiled over. "The firm offered to keep me on with my work taken away from me and given to another man. Charity! If I could pay them back every penny I have ever had from them, I would. If I were a younger man, I would work myself to the bone until I had paid them back."—"But they could not pay you back the work you have done."—"If it had been work for righteous men I could not regret one moment of it, but for men like you, like your brother . . ." He had risen from his chair and Jamie stood also. He was shocked to see how thin and old Peter looked. Peter had lost even his trim spruceness. He was a figure of weak inarticulate fury. After a moment or two he seemed to feel his weakness and he sank back into his chair again, took up the newspaper and began once more to read the advertisements. So, sick at heart, Jamie left him.

There could not have been a more complete apparent denial of the joy that had so recently possessed him and that he had believed to be omnipotent. It had failed him. It had failed to give him power to break through the unhappy Peter's misery, and yet through the encounter it had become active and fierce: no longer a sweet easy condition, but almost a pain, which was redoubled as Mrs. Leslie came out of the parlour. He said:—"I can

do nothing with him, but for you there is nothing that I will not try to do." And he almost broke into sobs when the little woman seized his hand and kissed it.—"It's my fault," said she. "I can't help trying to be cheerful, whatever happens, and it does aggravate him so." Her words made Jamie want to laugh through his sorrow. He patted Mrs. Leslie's cheek and told her that she must be cheerful even if it drove Peter off his head, as of course it would not, because he would soon discover that she was worth more than all the big firms in Thrigsby put together.—"He! He! Jamie," said Mrs. Leslie, mopping at her eyes with a child's stocking she had produced from her pocket, "I declare you haven't changed a bit. You are the same boy that came here all those years ago."

When he left her Jamie walked straight over to Tom's house and asked to see Agnes. She received him in the little room they called the breakfast-room, though they never had breakfast in it. He came straight to the point and told her of Tom's treatment of Peter Leslie. Did she know?—No. Tom never told her anything about his work. The Greigs had never told their wives anything either, so she had not expected it, and thought it must be very difficult.—"How do you think it can be difficult if Tom can succeed in it?"—"I wonder why you and Tom can never admit each other's ability?" asked Agnes.—"Ability is comparative and Tom's is not supreme. I don't see that that is disparaging."—"Very well, then, business is quite easy but I don't suppose I should find it interesting."—"Do you find anything interesting?"—"O! yes. Being happy is so."—"I find that it depends upon the quality of the happiness and happiness for its own sake is only a pleasant form of boredom. But I want something done for the Leslies. He has his salary to the end of the year and then noth-

ing or next door to it. He cannot have saved much with a wife and seven children to keep."—"I will ask Tom."—"I have no hope of Tom. He will be official and say that as an employer he knows nothing of Leslie's wife and family and has no interest in the way in which his employees choose to spend their salaries. I say and I want you to say that Leslie is entitled to a pension or at least to some small charge on the firm's profits."—"I will certainly say so, but it will make Tom very angry."—"I don't see why you should mind making him angry."—"But I do. I'll help the Leslies myself if they need help."—"They don't. They want justice." Jamie was really angry with Agnes' placidity. She seemed to be incapable of imagining that there could be injustice in the dismissal of a clerk, who was apparently only a part of the machinery of an office, to be kept in working order while useful, and to be dismissed when no longer so. The office was something entirely remote from Agnes' life. It swallowed up Tom every morning and returned him between six and seven in the evening. It had besides some mysterious function in the maintenance of Thrigsby which the Greigs, with some assistance from the Keiths, had created and established for ever. And because the Greigs and Keiths had created and established Thrigsby Tom, being a connection, was to extract from it large sums of money. He did this through an office, and she did not really conceive that Tom worked or that it could be necessary.

All this from her conversation Jamie roughly divined and he recognised the spirit which in old Andrew had caused him to revolt and in the Greigs made the atmosphere of their homes absolutely asphyxiating. He thought he could detect it here in Tom's house and that did a little account to his mind for the dismissal of Peter Les-

lie. Also, he was bound to admit, Agnes' theory of Thrigsby and the office was to a certain extent borne out by the facts. It was really false only in the assumption that the Keiths and the Greigs, and perhaps the Allisons, had created and established Thrigsby, for there were at least a hundred other families living serenely under the same impression, and very proud of it too. The fact that they were rich seemed to prove it. They were rich because they had conferred benefits on their fellow-men, who showed small gratitude and much envy.

It was a new side of Agnes and Jamie was puzzled by it, for it did not diminish his old admiration and love for her. They remained, but this new aspect made him understand why he had held aloof from and idealised her. That strange hardness in her was repellent to love, which could only gain access to her through persistent violence. All her rare and beautiful qualities were inactive. She was static and would never be either old or young, never pitying, never compassionate, never sympathetic, but always easy, kind and charitable. In its way it was as tragic as Peter Leslie. And here too was inaccessibility to joy.—"I'm in no luck to-day," thought Jamie humorously, and he began to see himself as rather absurd. However, he felt that he owed justice to Peter and stayed on until Tom came home. Then he let fly, pleading his cause eloquently and moderately, so as to leave no loophole for an accusation of prejudice. Tom heard him out to the end.—"You can't expect us to pension a clerk of ours merely because he is a friend of yours. Every clerk in our office knows that we have no pension fund and pensions are bad in principle; they discourage thrift and enterprise and encourage slackness. On the other hand, while our clerks behave themselves, they know that they are as safe as if they were in the

Bank of England. As for Leslie, the fact is that he is past his work and ought really to have retired when Andrew died. Uncle Andrew ought to have left him a small legacy upon which he could have retired quietly without all this fuss. As it is we kept him on until reconstruction made it imperative that he and one or two others should go. He could have stayed on and made himself useful in a number of small ways, but he preferred to go. If we give him a pension then the other clerks will expect the same and the firm cannot afford it." —"Put in the name of justice."—"Justice? He has no claim on us. He has been paid for his service. He has nothing to complain of on that score."—"That sounds to me more like law than justice."—"My dear James, the law of the land and of the time in which you live is justice. Only a knave or a fool will look beyond it."—"Then the world owes its progress to knaves and fools." —"Possibly. All right-thinking men are content with the world as it is."—"And to leave honest men to starve." —"What nonsense? We are quite ready to give Leslie the warmest recommendation for any position he may apply for. And he must have saved."—"With seven children?"—"Our mother brought us up on ninety pounds a year and I beg you to remember what *her* feelings were about *her* pension."—"It is not the money that Leslie is worrying about. He has been hurt in his devotion to the firm."—"That is sentiment. There is no longer room for sentiment in business. You ought to know that. Every penny counts nowadays and there is no room for luxury or leisure. The whole affair has been very painful to me, but it became clear that as long as Leslie stayed there was no getting the full amount of work out of the other clerks."—"And also, I suppose," remarked Jamie sarcastically, "he was grossly overpaid."

—"The salary list has been revised, certainly."—"Including yours?"—"I am not a salaried partner. The salaried partners have been subject to the revision. I wish you would believe me when I assure you that you are wasting your time. These people always have grievances. There are men in this town who devote their whole lives to the venting of grievances, and pestiferous nuisances they are. I hope you are not going to become one of those. You had much better stick to your rogues and vagabonds."—Jamie swallowed the implied insult cheerfully:—"Very well then," he said. "Will you give me the three hundred pounds you owe me?"—"What three hundred?"—"You offered fifteen hundred for Clibran and gave me twelve hundred."—"Not at all. You insisted on the surveyor, and besides you sold Clibran to Agnes, not to me."—"Will *you* give me the three hundred then, Agnes?"—"Certainly," said she.—"I forbid it," cried Tom. "I forbid it. I forbid you to entrust a single farthing to this fellow who has no sense of the value of money and no respect for it." Jamie saw Agnes flush with pleasure as Tom's voice grew louder and louder. She enjoyed being bullied by him, revelled in it. She was afraid of him and delighted in her fear. For two or three minutes she let him rail on and then she said meekly: "Yes, Tom." And Tom shook himself like a dog that has growled at another dog smaller than itself and frightened it away. Then he turned to his brother and said magnanimously: "Of course, if Leslie finds himself in real difficulties we will do what we can for him." Tom's face adopted the expression he wore when he was feeling virtuous, which was his greatest and most constant pleasure and was gained chiefly in the contemplation of the wickedness, the folly or the recklessness of others. Now he had two causes for it: Leslie's crim-

inally rash declaration of independence and Jamie's wild espousal of the cause of his inferior. Add to that his successful squashing of his wife, and he had good reason to be self-satisfied. Thomas Lawrie was master in his own house and his own business; "come the four corners of the world in arms" and he would shock them. He straddled his legs in front of the fire, parting his coat-tails to warm the backs of his thighs.—"I am not an ungenerous man," he said in a surprisingly gentle voice, while Jamie and Agnes on either side stared up at him: "I am not an ungenerous man, I hope, but I have my principles, and I believe that every man should look after himself and not look to others for support in any crisis. If a man is honest, thrifty and puts his trust in God he should have no difficulty. If he fails in any of these then he should face the consequences without squealing."—"Have done!" cried Jamie unable to bear it any longer. "If there ever was a thrifty, honest and pious man it is poor Leslie and, though you refuse to see it, he has deserved better at your hands. What you do with all your money or what you want with it, I don't know, but it seems to me that it's as much a dead end with you as poverty is to the—to the men you have impoverished." With that he stalked out of the room and the house. Tom had become entirely and intolerably fantastic to him. His own brother! Tom, whom he remembered as an eager ambitious boy, come down to smug scratching of his own virtue, with his honesty, and his thrift and his trust in God! Nay, that was more tragic than Peter in his easy-chair. Peter was but a poor, tame frightened man at the best, but Tom had had pride and vigour.—"I will not believe it," said Jamie to himself. "I'll not believe it." He half-persuaded himself that it was his own fault, that he was not the person to inter-

fere, that he ought to have remembered the old animosity there had always been between himself and his brother. But then there was the bullying of Agnes. There had been hints of that before, incidents that should have revealed to him before the true relationship of the couple. Agnes had been bullied into marriage, not against her will, but because she had liked it, because it broke in upon the somnolence induced by her own charm.

The experiences of that day forced Jamie into acknowledging that he had been living in a fool's paradise, believing in humanity, that men were bound together by some profound spiritual tie which in certain relationships, such as marriage, friendship or common suffering, was made clear to them: further that men were masters of their actions and always knew tolerably well what they were doing. Certainly he himself hated doing anything that he did not understand sufficiently to set his conscience at rest. Now however his innocence was shocked. Men, he began to see, were terribly at the mercy of their actions, and for the first time he really doubted himself. Was his own case any better than Tom's or Peter Leslie's? Was he not also at a dead end, making it tolerable by indulgence in the most easily procured pleasures? That with the wonderful free joy still stirring in him he could most fiercely deny. Only he felt sorry, utterly and miserably sorry that such things could be. Mrs. Leslie and her Peter, Agnes and her Tom.—Where in either was evidence of the spiritual tie which he had so fondly imagined? Ugly, ugly and mean it was, the life of those honoured and respectable couples. Money or no money had nothing to do with it. Their cruel confinement came not from their circumstances but from the conceptions by which they lived. They were neither to be blamed nor hated. The evil

that they represented lay rather behind than in them. It was an evil everywhere present. It had produced the rows and rows of little houses, the flat, prosperous villas, the immense factories, the foul canals, the smoking stacks, the blighted trees and the pale blighted men and women of the streets. It was subtle and compelling and there was no escape from it. To that pass had men all come that they must live in evil, because they lived so narrowly, so huddled in one upon another, that there was no moving out of the filth of their own decay or the stench of their own excrement. Almost Jamie began to hate his joy which had led him to feel bitterly this clinging, muddy evil. He did not know, could not know its source. It obscured his own knowledge of good, for the good he had always acknowledged had become mechanical and automatic. It was no longer a living principle. It was only another aspect of that dreaded evil. There was so little goodness in it. It was hardly more than a dressing up for decency. He wandered through the streets and every sight that met his eyes confirmed his impression. He choked with it all, was stifled with the agony of his own ability to apprehend the idea intellectually. It was as though the truth in him was burned out and dwindled to ashes. He was left with nothing but ugly facts. It was no comfort to him to think that all these men and women were enduring heroically the abomination that was in them. They were not heroic. They were living in hiding. They were preserving decency, no more. All their effort, all their striving achieved no more than that.—He had a sense of being in the midst of some appalling mysterious catastrophe, devastating the whole world so that thought no longer had any machinery wherewith to work, since all

things were subtly transformed so that their names no longer applied to them.

He came at last to the street in which he lived, so respectable, so prosperous, already so suburban, and when he came to his own house he said: "This is my home." He needed to reassure himself. The word "home" was a mockery. It should stand for the dearest and the purest known to man, but there the evil was most firmly seated. Every house in the street was a place of authority, within each a man like Peter Leslie enthroned in an easy-chair, a dead man at a dead end.

Yet in his own house he found comfort. In his mother he met purity and strength. He found her innocent and his impulse was to go down on his knees before her, for the sight of her could release him from the almost terror that had possessed him. She was marvellously alive to the need in him and was very gentle and tender. He surprised her into intimate talk and she went back over the years and told him more about his father than she had ever done, so that he felt, what he had thought, that love for her was in the grave. Yet that love was indeed her only thought, so that there was no evil in her. She was no longer of the world and the evil had passed her by, or she had been armed against it. From his father and those deep memories her talk passed naturally to her religion and Jamie understood how perfectly it was an expression of her love, the stern and tender love she must have had for the devout and gentle man, his father. But outside in the world from which he had fled to her such a love could no longer live. It had lost its expression. Evil had broken the vessel that could contain it, or perhaps the vessel had been broken so that evil could enter in.

He could not tell her of the cataclysm in his life. She

would not have understood it, for she was already so remote. Her work was done and she had folded her hands. She was happy still and clear of soul in her faith and her love. These had sustained her and she would never understand that they were not sustenance also for her sons. They were good men, as men go, and she was content. To her it was but a strange incident that Jamie should turn to her. He had a difficult character. There must be times for him when he felt altogether weak and helpless and unworthy. His father had had such times, when he had felt that he could no longer teach the Christian belief in the face of the meanness and jealousy and spiteful rivalry of the folk in the glen. It had been difficult and she had often had to back his gentleness with her authority. But here in the town the people were so much pleasanter, so much more ready to accommodate each other, at every turn there was such kindness that there was no call whatever for despair. Jamie had only to do his work; the care of souls was no affair of his. He had only to do his duty to prosper and indeed he had his share of prosperity. Whence then these collapses? . . . All the same, though she could not in the least understand him, she was glad to be able to comfort him, and to take him back in thought to Scotland, where she too was happier and livelier, for a while, until she would begin to remember the lives of men she had known there, fair hopeful men, with the same strong stirring of the mind that had too often suddenly, and for no apparent reason, collapsed. Then she would be afraid, and quickly would conceal her fear, and no more comfort could she bring. Life here in the town was so much easier and gentler. There could not be the same dangers. It would be all right. "That" could not happen here.—She had no clear idea of the

nature of "that," but her memory darted for one little flash to the death of her husband and to his willingness to die, and beyond that to other men who had met another kind of death in life. It was only for a flash. Those things were very far away. Here were ease and security and prosperity assured.

Her thoughts had carried Jamie with her and he sat grimly opposite to her, staring into her face, searching her eyes for the knowledge that condemned him. He looked like a doomed man. He gazed at her as though in her thoughts were some heaven from which he was for ever shut out. Yet, as he gazed and saw that heaven he felt that the evil was behind him, and he began fiercely to hope for another and a higher heaven. Hers was too remote, and for ever inaccessible. What he hoped for was a sudden revelation, a golden city springing from the earth, towards which, even though he might never enter it, he would be content to struggle. Some such vision he needed to resist his new consciousness of evil, and, because he needed it, already in the depths of his soul his spirit had begun to create.—"The life of a man," said Margaret suddenly, "must be a hard thing for it is always torn two ways."—"I have always had most pity for women," replied Jamie.—"There is only one way for a woman," said she, "and I could never understand your father when, as he always used, he talked of intellectual beauty."—"Aye," said Jamie, "you would always understand a man's thoughts in relation to the man, but never value them for themselves. And suppose his passion was in them, what then, what then?"—"Jamie, Jamie," said she, "it might be your father speaking, and he used to torture himself with the thought that it was sin, though he never was and never could be

a sinful man."—"Then," said Jamie humbly, "that is my inheritance from him."

So he went away and sat for hours in front of his father's portrait, scanning the beautiful rather weak face, the wistful dreaming eyes, the delicate mouth, sensitive and trembling, that never could have borne any rude tasting of beauty through the senses, and therefore could have known no sin, no defilement of beauty for sensation. The forehead was wide and clear. Behind it, Jamie imagined, thought must have moved with an ease and largeness unknown and never to be known to himself. How then was there sin? The faith that was in his mother was limpid in this man. But again were there not thoughts in his brain which his faith could not constrain? Was that his sin? Jamie decided that it was so, that already his faith was insufficient, that he also had desired a new Heaven and a new Earth, for when the faith is insufficient, then evil must be triumphant.

Having got so far, Jamie turned from the picture and went to the window to look out into the scrubby little back garden with its blackened earth, and meagre trees, at the grimy walls of the houses opposite and the smudged sky. It amused him to think that in that prospect he was looking for a new heaven and a new earth, seeking in the evil itself for the power that should combat it. Tibby came out into the garden with a basket of clothes which she proceeded to hang out on the line. He watched her, fascinated by the movements of her strong thin body. She had on a blue cotton dress and the colour seemed to lighten all the scene, to draw out colour and force from what had before seemed only drab. She was the centre of it all, one solitary human figure, dignified, indestructible. The excitement died out of him. He felt entirely, utterly alone with Tibby. That she was unconscious of

his presence only strengthened the idea, and he had no desire to have more than the idea of it. With her, with the idea of her, he felt strong and most wonderfully serene.

Now she had emptied her basket and returned to the house again. He felt then that he understood what Margaret must have been to his father, who became at once a living presence to him so that the myth and legend he had always been perished. The house was now a living home. It was a stronghold. It was a chamber in the golden city of his dreams, but only the more repulsive was the life outside and the thought of going into it again. He would have the night. Perhaps the night spent in this new home would give him strength.

A messenger brought a proof of his article on the play. He corrected it without heeding a sentence or remarking anything but verbal inaccuracies, while the messenger was waiting, a cheese-faced boy who sucked his teeth and shifted from one foot to the other. "Who sent you?" asked Jamie.—"Mr. Bigge, sir."—"Wait a moment and I'll give you a note."—"Yes, sir."

Jamie wrote to Currie Bigge asking him if he wanted a clerk in the office, and, if so, would he communicate with Mr. Leslie at the given address.—"If I were you," said Jamie to the cheese-faced boy, "I should run away to sea."—"I 'ave thought of it, sir," replied the cheese-faced boy, "but I believe sailors is 'orrible rough."—"You'd see the world."—"Plenty to see in Thrigsby," replied the boy, rather despising Jamie as an amateur, one who wrote his "stuff" at home comfortably and avoided the manly rush of the office where at a moment's notice men could write on Foreign policy or the finances of the local infirmary. Nor was the cheese-faced boy's opinion mended by the present of sixpence he received.

He was used to being cuffed or kicked. He pocketed the coin and broke into a whistle and went out whistling.

This intrusion restored Jamie to his normal condition and he turned to his books. He had just discovered Webster and was soon deep in the *White Devil* which he read far into the night, finding in it lines and phrases which he crooned over and over to himself until he had lost the excitement they roused in him and he could appreciate their real strength and keenness which seemed to cut through the appearances of life to reveal life itself. Never before had he so closely established a communication between his own being and the poetry he worshipped. From that heaven he was not shut out, and what greater heaven could there be? So powerful was this happiness that it endured for many days and carried him easily through the routine of the bank and through distasteful hours in the evening at the theatre in which he had lost faith. Poetry and wit were done to death in it, and it was a place of blasphemy where the loveliest movements of the human mind and heart were debased to make sport for snobs and sentimentalists.

Much Ado About Nothing was kept in the bill for a month and was replaced by *She Stoops to Conquer,* which was a failure. Mr. Wilcox had not the physique for Tony Lumpkin and was too old, and he was so pleased with himself in the part that there was no holding him in. This failure produced internal dissension. One night when Jamie was in the theatre the acting manager came to him and held out a copy of *The Post,* with half-a-column heavily scored in pencil. It was the notice of *Much Ado.* Jamie read it, not at first recognising it as his own, though it seemed to him rather well written. —"Well, Mr. Lawrie!"—"Well, Mr. Tonks!"—"Several members of the company want to know what you have

to say about it, Mr. Lawrie."—"It is a newspaper opinion."—"Is it yours?"—"Yes, certainly."

The acting manager worked himself up into a fury:—"There's been a deal of talk about that article, Mr. Lawrie, and several of the ladies and gentlemen feel that they have been made a laughing-stock of, Mr. Lawrie. They have held meetings about it and the sense of the meeting held to-day was that nothing but a public apology on the stage would be adequate."—"It seems to me a very fair opinion on a matter of public interest. It is not an expression of my private opinion. If I had expressed that you would have had a grievance."—"That's all very fine," said the acting manager plucking up courage, when he saw that his onslaught had been taken amiably. "That's all very fine, but I'm not here to split hairs. The play was your own show and you ought not to have crabbed it. The success or failure of a play is a very serious matter to the ladies and gentlemen engaged in it. There are several of them who declare that they will leave the company unless they receive an apology."—"You can say I am very sorry."—"The apology must be public."—"That seems to me unnecessary. I am very sorry. I had not thought of the play in terms of bread-and-butter and I suppose I ought to have done."—"Very well, Mr. Lawrie, I will tell them what you say and I will not answer for the consequences." He strode away leaving Jamie more than ever disgusted with the theatre through this invasion of personal animosity and jealousy.

In a moment or two Mr. Wilcox came rushing up in a frantic state.—"They'll leave," he cried, "they'll leave if you don't apologise! Why, oh, why did you ever go and write that article? Why write anything? You weren't there as a critic, and she had such good notices

everywhere else. She'd have had the success of her life if it hadn't been for you. She'd have had offers from London, and she's had a very hard time of it. She can't really afford to go, but she will, if you don't apologise."—Jamie was beginning to feel nettled. He really was sorry and angry with himself for having been so ridiculously disinterested as to throw the whole scheme into jeopardy. He knew his Thrigsby well enough to appreciate what a good joke it would be for a man publicly to disparage his own goods. Thrigsby had not many canons of good taste, but it was among the first that a man shall not inquire into the quality of his own but shall assume its perfection.—"But why," asked Jamie, "was there no fuss before? The article is five weeks old."—Mr. Wilcox was nearly in tears.—"I lied to them," he said. "I told them that Quintus Flumen was another Mr. Lawrie. Then they found out that there was no other Mr. Lawrie on *The Post*. I said that Quintus Flumen was a name used by several men; but that very day there was an unsigned article. I've told them you are an eccentric and they didn't mind until this play was a failure. Then they said they'd been made a laughing-stock of and that you'd ruined them. And they fancied you were as rich as Rothschild, but now they've found out who you are."—"And Rothschild, I suppose," said Jamie, "would not be asked to apologise." —"For God's sake," said Mr. Wilcox, "don't be clever about it. Say you'll apologise or some of them will go out of the theatre and we shall have to ring down."— "I would be glad," said Jamie, "if the whole lot left the theatre for good and the place was turned into a Pepper's Ghost. They're only fit for *The Murder in the Red Barn*."—"I'm beginning to think," said Mr. Wilcox dolefully, "that it's a pity you ever came behind the scenes

at all, but you're a wonderful actor wasted and I've had such hopes. And all to come to this! I've never had any luck at all. I was born on the stairs and it is my destiny to go neither up nor down. But all goes by me on the stairs of life and my mother died of it."—Jamie could hold out no more. He clapped Mr. Wilcox on the shoulder and told him that he would see him through and would apologise to the actors if they would meet on the stage after the performance.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "I am very sorry to learn that you have for some weeks past been labouring under a misunderstanding and I only wish I had been informed of it sooner." Then he stopped. It was one thing to promise to apologise to these people, another to do it. He hated the whole pack of them standing in their powdered wigs, painted faces and old costumes. The words stuck in his throat. He had done them no real harm. He had only wounded their preposterous vanity, from which it had been his impulse to defend their art. He was quite clear suddenly as to his motive in what he had done. It was a necessary and a good thing to have done, and because he had wounded their vanity they were insisting upon his humiliation, and that was not to be endured. The words stuck in his throat. He began again: "Ladies and gentlemen," and again he stopped, and stared round at them. Would none of them speak? His presence there was apology and humiliation enough for them. He felt a hard wall of hostility all round him. Not another word could he find. Why waste words on hostility? The whole company was assembled. From a far corner came a sob and a wail and Fanny Shaw rushed away. That broke Jamie's defiance and the ring of hostility. He admitted that he had done a very foolish thing which was open to

misconstruction and he declared himself heartily sorry for it. His apology was accepted with a few genial observations by the acting-manager and the company dissolved, leaving only the leading players on the stage. The Beatrice obviously expected a few words in her own private ear. That was difficult, for Jamie had not altered his opinion of her and thought her a bad actress and a detestable woman. However he gulped down his distaste, which mounted again as he saw her bridle at his approach. She had tasted the sweets of revenge and had laid low a "manager" and on the whole she was grateful to him for it. Very archly she said, in her best Beatrice manner: "Oh! you *are* a naughty man!"—"Now," replied Jamie with a most courtly bow, "I have your opinion of me and we can cry quits." With that he walked on and the leading lady said: "What a tongue, my word, what a tongue!"

Only then did Jamie discover that there is a real pleasure in being disliked when respect for the person from whom it comes is impossible. What he did not appreciate was the fact that he had redoubled the woman's pleasure at having humbled him.

He went in search of Fanny and found her crying her heart out at the end of a dark passage. She flung herself into his arms crying: "She's a beast, she's a beast, and you oughtn't to have said it."—"Pooh!" said Jamie. "Who's the worse for it?" But the child had worked herself into a passion and would not listen to him.—"She's been saying awful things about you and making everybody else say them too."—"But I don't mind what they say, Fanny."—"I mind," she moaned, "and I would like to run away."—"Dearest child," said Jamie, "I shouldn't have said anything if it hadn't been for you. I couldn't say a word until it all seemed silly and not

worth bothering about."—"It's all been spoiled."—"No, no. They'll forget about it very soon."—"But I sha'n't. I never forget anything."—"I know you don't." He found it very difficult to find the right thing to say. She was comforted, but she still clung to him, and it needed a strong effort of sympathy for him to discover how deeply she was hurt. But with that effort he saw that her childish innocence was broken and she was alive to the harshness and hard egoism of men and women, but as yet had no defences against them. He recognised his own responsibility. He had saved her from her normal development through a slow lapse into her surroundings until she was one with them, and had helped her to pass from the wonder of childhood to a world even more magical, and then through his own humiliation her illusions had been snapped.

It was the most bitter failure he had ever known, but it was one with all the rest. No sooner did he gain some little beauty than it was destroyed, not by his own wickedness but by his absolute inability to defend it. How had this thing happened? He had so loved the child's happiness, had so delighted in her thoughts that he had never given them any correction in his own. He had been able to live in her mind but had never aided her to dwell in his. She had seemed to him so perfect as to be beyond danger. And now that the danger had come he could do nothing against it but could only mutter incoherent words. The fury in the child shocked him. He had forgotten his own boyish rages.—"Run along now, Fanny," he said. "Run and change and I'll take you home." She was quiet now and obeyed him. When she returned he found her in a docile mood, almost sullen. She had placed herself unreservedly in his hands. Then he found that he no longer thought of her as a child.

She had grown most astonishingly, and was tall and thin: in body rather like Tibby when she had first come to the family. She said: "I've got to go on because mother wants the money, and if I didn't go on I should have to go into a factory."—"How would you like to go to school?"—"Me? They'd laugh at me. No. I must go on."—"But I don't want you to go on if it will make you unhappy."—"It won't if I can see you."—Now he had been careful not to see too much of her, for he had been anxious that she should find her feet for herself, believing, as he had done, in her immunity from harm. He was brought back to the personal relationship and its responsibilities. Those he had not even realised and his effect upon the child had been to isolate her at the very time when she most needed support. That he knew she would not find at home, but, without him, she would have accepted the impossibility of all such growth as cannot be accomplished unaided.—"I'll promise you," he said, "I'll promise you that. We'll have nearly every Saturday."—"I don't want anybody else," she said. "I don't care about anybody else." She seemed very weary. Her face was that of a little old woman. Always she had had an amazing knowledge, a singularly exact understanding of her surroundings which she had been able to bear easily and without pain. Now she was all pain.—"To-morrow," he said, "you must rest. I won't hear of your going to the theatre. If you don't rest, I won't see you on Saturday."—"I'm tired," said Fanny, "that's what it is."—"Yes, poor thing. Tired out."—"I'll be all right, I expect, after a rest. Mother's like that. She gets tired out and sometimes the smell of the house is too much for her." As they reached the door of her house she put up her face and he kissed her. She was reluctant to let him go

and kept him talking for some moments longer. When she knocked he stood and watched her until the door opened and she passed into the darkness of the house. All the clear beauty had faded from his image of the child and he was bound to her by her passionate need of him. Without him she would be swallowed up by the dark house and by the squalid and hideously vibrant life of which it was a part. He was fully alive to the waking woman in her, dreaded it as a new force in the conflict of good and evil for which he had found himself suddenly so ill equipped. Yet he had gained in himself. He was aware in himself of vast new stores of patience. Not yet was he defeated. Nothing outside himself had completely had its way with him, but also, his honesty admitted, nothing inside himself had yet fought its way to a conclusion.

She Stoops to Conquer never recovered. Two or three other plays were tried but with hardly more success. Jamie had lost nearly two thousand pounds when there came the news from London that a new great actor had arisen, who was none other than Henry Acomb. He was hailed as a tragedian worthy to rank with Kean and Macready. In one night he had conquered London with his performance of a dual personality, a nice and benevolent merchant by day, a dipsomaniac and a murderer by night. Jamie rushed up to London to see him. The success was indubitable. There had been eight weeks of triumph and now it was proposed to consolidate this by visits to the principal provincial towns beginning with Edinburgh. Jamie offered his theatre and Henry Acomb accepted it, agreeing to play *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*. Jamie saw that it was a surrender. He was convinced that only the genius of the individual player could keep

the theatre alive in England. Acomb's genius certainly made even the absurd melodrama in which he was playing seem marvellous.—"Upon me soul, Mr. Lawrie," he said, "it does me good to see you. An honest, northern face. London is all rogues and old women, and an audience of Londoners is like an audience of sheep. They cheered me on the opening night, and it sounded like this: Baa! Baa-a-a! Baa-a-a-a!"—Jamie laughed and recounted his experiences.—"Amateurs!" said Henry Acomb, "amateurs! You can't expect a city of workers to put up with the kind of show that would do in a duke's drawing-room."—Acomb was entirely charming. His egoism had lost its aggressiveness. He had won that for which he had fought during fifteen poverty-stricken years and no longer needed to convince himself of his own greatness. It was generally acknowledged, and he was inclined to despise it a little. Selina was not for the moment playing. She had two children and devoted herself to them.—"I tell you what," said Acomb, "I'm going to put a stop to the treatment of actors as rogues and vagabonds. It is a calling like any other. I shall have me home, me wife and me children like any other man and I'll be treated like any other man, if I have to go to Parliament for it."

So Jamie returned to Thrigsby with the glad news that Henry Acomb would come fresh from his London triumph. Mr. Wilcox was then happy, and Mrs. Leslie's heart was rejoiced when she heard that Selina was coming, rich, successful and respectable once more.

Selina had gained in grace. She was devoted to her Henry and their struggles had made her practical and sensible. She was even more in revolt against a Bohemian life than he and had firmly set her face against poverty. When she heard of the plight to which her

father and mother were reduced she insisted that they must leave Thrigsby, take a cottage in the country and keep chickens. She went down to see Hubert at his farm, being neither afraid of her memories nor abashed by them, bought a cottage and within a week had her father and mother installed in it, Peter enthroned in his easy-chair, and Mrs. Leslie hard at work in the garden. Selina's energy and happiness were contagious. She told Jamie to his face that he was a fool, but a very dear one, and that he had better stick to his pen and leave acting to actors, journalism to journalists, and living to people who wanted to live.—"But that," he said, "is just what they don't want to do."—"Pooh!" she replied. "You don't know anything about it." She simply melted the unhappiness in him, and wafted away his heavy sense of responsibility with a touch. She wormed out of him a full confession of his deeds and misdeeds and it was only with the greatest anxiety that he could bring himself to tell her about Fanny.—"It's a woman's job. Let me have the child. Or, if that's impossible, since you insist on it, you must look about for a wife and make her do it. My goodness, gracious me, what are the women of the town thinking of to let a dear, handsome creature like you go about loose?"—Jamie laughed aloud:—"My dear Selina," he said, "don't forget you ran away from me yourself."—"You were so overpowering," she answered, "and if there's any overpowering to be done, I prefer to do it myself."—At that he roared with laughter and she was rather puzzled.—"What's the joke?" she asked.—"You. You're the most splendid joke in the world." That, however, was not Selina's view of herself and she protested in good round terms. She knew what life was, and it was to her anything but a joke. The point was arguable, but she was impatient of argument.

CHAPTER XXXIV

JOHN'S RETURN

FOR a time then Selina occupied Jamie's attention to the exclusion of everything else. The theatre made money but not enough to repair all that he had lost. He did not mind that, if it had been necessary to bring Selina back into his world, and a Selina so transformed and become a living fount of humour and zest. She teased him for being an old stick-in-the-mud and declared that in many ways he had not altered a bit since he was a boy and had written love poems to her.—"And you still talk Scotch," she said.—"And why not?"—"You don't want everybody to know where you've come from."—"But why not? I'm proud of coming from Scotland."—"It's like a label round your neck and people ought not to wear labels. It doesn't matter in the least where you come from, but it does matter that you are Jamie Lawrie."—"A name is only a label."—"No one thinks about it. No one would have said that but you. There are names just as there are knives and forks. O! Jamie, if I'd married you I'd have had you out of this. But I thank God I didn't marry you."—"So do I," said he quaintly. "I was born to trouble like my friend Mr. Wilcox."—"A pair of innocents," said she, "and you ought to be parted by main force. I shall make Henry take old Wilcox back to London. He's not good enough but

he's just the kind of darling old fool who makes an ideal stage manager. And he adores Henry almost as much as he adores you, and with better reason. Henry may be a genius but he has a head screwed on his shoulders and would never lead anybody into a mess. You see, Henry knows what he wants."—"Is all this for my benefit?" asked Jamie. "I fancy that if a man is able to know what he wants, it is because he does not want anything much. I am suspicious of that kind of man. He is fat and eats too much."—"Who? Henry?"—"No. That kind of man, and by eating I don't mean food. I mean every kind of desire."—"Now that's exactly why I couldn't marry you, because you always mean more than you say and say one thing when you really mean another. It has grown on you and there is no hope for you."—"If you don't stop bullying me I shall write about Henry in *The Post.*"—"Do you know, I met a man in London the other day who said you were the only critic in England."—"Really. It is obviously not true."—"Yes. He had written a book about money and you had said it was the most amusing volume that had appeared for years."—"I remember it. Money is the funniest thing in the world."—"Not when you haven't got any."—"So you like having money?""—"Yes. Love it."—"Why?"—"It makes you so free, so free. Everything that is happy in you can come out then."—"Then people ought to be paid according to their capacity for happiness."—"O dear," she said, "if you're going to worry about what ought to be I give you up. You really must take care or you'll turn into a G.G. or gloomy grizzler."

She insisted on seeing Margaret and then for the first time she was depressed. Margaret was perfectly charming to her and showed herself genuinely pleased at her success. She had read her newspapers and knew that

Thrigsby was proud of Henry Acomb. But Selina simply could find nothing to say. Reminiscences were soon exhausted and then conversation ended. The two women respected each other, but they had nothing in common. Neither's charity could include the other. Jamie felt the division but could do nothing to break it down, nothing to interpret them to each other though he loved and honoured both.

Selina frankly confessed her embarrassment to him.—"It's no good," she said. "It simply stifled me. All the time I could not help thinking how like she is to my father, though she is entirely different and a saint. She is a saint and I am the world and the flesh, and I am not and never shall be a family woman. If ever my children begin to talk about 'the Acombs' I shall turn them out at once to learn that there are other people in the world."—"That is all very well for you," said Jamie. "You have the world at your feet, but other people are ambitious and have no means of gratifying it, because they are neither charming, nor clever, nor witty."—"You have theories for everything," said Selina, a little tartly, because she had really suffered and now resented time wasted on suffering. "I can't understand people wanting to be anything but lovable."—"That also is impossible for most people."—"Of course it is," cried she, "because they won't love and, if you don't take care, it will be quite impossible for you. You will grow into a saint and a martyr and I shall hate you."

It would be quite useless, he saw, to explain to her that his mother also had loved. Selina's love was easy and maternal, hardly more than a part of her abounding physical well-being. She was very wonderful but he was devoutly thankful that he had escaped having her for a mate. For her part she shuddered when she thought

that she might have had to live with him in such a house as that, regular, ordered, neat, tidy, overcrowded and drab.—"I don't wonder the man's running to seed," she said to Henry as she described the tea with Margaret. "When I think of the handsome proud boy he was it makes me savage. To think of a man like that living with his mother. She might be an angel from heaven but she could never satisfy the devil in him, and that's what a man wants, isn't it, darling?"—Henry scratched his head:—"Yes," he said, "upon me soul, women are savages and it is just as well."—"O, Henry," she said, "never a day passes but I thank God for not giving you any brains."—Henry looked dubious over that and again he scratched his head.—"The immortal bard had brains." —"Yes," said Selina, breathlessly and indignantly, "and we know what he was."—"What was he?"—"Well, he was in love with a man."—"Oh!" said Henry. "Is that what brains does for you?"—"It is," replied Selina, "and brains with Jamie Lawrie is neither more nor less than a disease."—"But you like him?"—"Of course I like him. He makes you want to take him in your arms and comfort him and stop the world from hurting him. I can't think why no one does it."—"You had your chance," said Henry, in whom there were still some seeds of jealousy. "And after all the world hurts me even if I haven't any brains."—"Hum!" said Selina. "You are much more likely to hurt the world than to let it hurt you and that's why I love you. But Jamie lets it hurt him through other people, which seems to me to be asking for trouble."—Henry was incapable of understanding that and the conversation languished. Selina seized the opportunity to arrange that Mr. Wilcox should be taken back to London, and it was agreed upon.

Negotiations were subsequently opened for taking

Fanny also but her mother flatly refused. The idea of London frightened her. It was a wicked place, full of marauding men and governments, press-gangs, luxurious and wicked marquises and earls. It had cost her much effort to be convinced of Mr. Lawrie's virtue. Mr. Lawrie had pledged himself to secure the safety and advancement of her girl, and further than that she could not go. In her heart of hearts she absolutely distrusted Selina and did not believe a word she said, though she was quite ready to accept a substantial gift of money.—"She's a good girl," said Mrs. Shaw, "and good girls is rare. And if a woman has such a blessing in the house she ought to stick to it. Who am I to look a gift from above in the mouth, with rent to pay and butcher's meat at the price it is? Take your blessings, I say. The poor don't 'ave too many and there's no call for them to go gathering mushrooms in the streets. I wouldn't let a girl of mine go to London, not if it was to be set on the golden throne itself. And besides that she's a growing girl yet and her troubles are yet to come." Selina was a shrewd judge of womankind and knew when to hold her peace. She sighed, for she saw that it would go hardly with Fanny, having such a mother to stand in her way and deny her right to anything better than she herself had known.

Selina was glad to leave Thrigsby. It made her sad. She missed the dignity and ease of London, where she could be entirely happy with success and money and friendliness on every side of her. She was glad to leave Jamie too. He seemed to her, though this she did not tell him, very typical of Thrigsby, labouring, labouring, straining in the darkness, while love and laughter and all sweet things passed him by.

On the other hand she left him feeling that he had

had a bright holiday, all the more delightful for the element of flirtation there had been in all his conversation with her, and he plunged back the more eagerly into his ordinary life. And as Selina became more remote from him she did seem just a joke, delicious for the moment, but unessential. She stood for nothing but evanescence. He could no more symbolise her than he could a sunbeam in a shower of rain. He soon found that the idea of her was not necessary to him, not half so necessary as the idea of any member of his family or the idea of Tibby, which was always hovering, unheeded, behind his thoughts. All the same Selina had left him conscious of his unmated condition, and he had been subtly aware of her scorn of him as a man in full maturity living with his mother. His vanity resented it and by way of protest he set about making his relation with his mother a more delightful and satisfying one and strove to break up the habits which encouraged their daily indifference to each other. He talked to her of the books he was reading, of the doings of his day in town, of her doings and of her friends—(she had a small but very loyal and admiring circle)—even of Tom's virtues, and of John's future. Evening after evening he sat and read the Bible to her and tried to induce her to appreciate its finest passages as literature; but she would not have the Bible criticised, nor one passage set above another. Still less would she listen to him when he tried to examine its philosophy of life. It was not to her a philosophy but an authority. However, her taste was good and her favourite book was Job, which she much preferred to the histories.—"If you'd only let me read Shakespeare to you," said Jamie one evening, "you would find *Hamlet* very like the Book of Job, though much better."—"There can be no com-

parison," said Margaret.—"Indeed, yes. The Bible is the book of the Jews. Shakespeare is the book of the English. They are very much alike except that the English have discovered humour as a relief from their destiny."—"Don't talk nonsense," said Margaret with a click of her knitting-needles.—"Shakespeare is only poetry. Read me the twenty-third chapter of Isaiah, the miserable overthrow of Tyre." And he read:

" 'The burden of Tyre. Howl, ye ships of Tarshish; for it is laid waste, so that there is no house, no entering in: from the land of Chittim it is revealed to them.

" 'Be still, ye inhabitants of the isle; thou whom the merchants of Zidon, that pass over the sea, have replenished.

" 'And by great waters the seed of Sihor, the harvest of the river, is her revenue; and she is a mart of nations.

" 'Be thou ashamed, O Zidon; for the sea hath spoken, even the strength of the sea, saying, I travail not, nor bring forth children, neither do I nourish up young men, nor bring up virgins.

" 'As at the report concerning Egypt, so shall they be sorely pained at the report of Tyre.

" 'Pass ye over to Tarshish; howl, ye inhabitants of the isle.

" 'Is this your joyous city, whose antiquity is of ancient days? her own feet shall carry her afar off to sojourn.

" 'Who hath taken this counsel against Tyre, the crowning city, whose merchants are princes, whose traffickers are the honourable of the earth?' "

Here he broke off to say: "I can't make much sense of it, but that last verse sounds like Thrigsby."—"Go on," said Margaret. He finished the chapter, and then

repeated the last two verses:—"This," he said, "is prophecy:

"'And it shall come to pass, after the end of seventy years, that the Lord will visit Tyre, and she shall turn to her hire, and shall commit fornication with all the kingdoms of the world upon the face of the earth.

"'And her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to the Lord: it shall not be treasured nor laid up; for her merchandise shall be for them that dwell before the Lord, to eat sufficiently, and for durable clothing.'"

"Reading Thrigsby for Tyre," he said, "I am only sorry that we have to wait seventy years."—"Prophecy," said Margaret, "is not to be taken literally. It is to turn our thoughts from worldly things. Many of your father's sermons were on the twenty-third chapter of Isaiah."—"Have you got any of them?" he asked.—"About fifteen. He used generally to preach extempore."—"I'd like to see them. The reference to food and clothing seems to me worldly enough, but perhaps as I am only a bank clerk it is difficult for me to escape all worldly thoughts. Tyre and Sidon were real places, you know, mother, and I think they must have been very like South Lancashire, without the smoke."—"They may have been real places," said Margaret, "but they are used in the book to express blemishes upon the soul. The book, your father used to say, is the story of the soul."—"But it is not a true story," said he, "for there is not a smile in it from beginning to end."—"Neither," replied she, "in the history of the soul upon earth is there anything so pleasant as a smile. It is one long expiation for the knowledge of good and evil, as we are told in the book of Genesis. We are happy for a little while as children, but that is soon taken from us and we have to bear our lot."—"I deny absolutely," said he, "that I

was happy as a child, and I was never happier in my life than I am now."—"But then you were not an ordinary child. You were a source of great anxiety to me."—"And I daresay that is why I never believed in a good without evil. I always did prefer poetry to prophecy and always shall."—Margaret sighed: "Well, I have done my best for you, Jamie. You must dree your own weird. It is not given to any of us to know what the Bible means, but it does make clear to us our own wickedness."—"I suppose so," said he, "but it makes even clearer the wickedness of other people. I shall be glad to hear what my father had to say on the subject and I should like to read him to the assembled family when John returns."—"That will be soon now," said Margaret. "They have been delayed because Sophia is going to have another baby and they do not wish to risk its being born at sea. She is not at all well and John is very anxious about her."—"I sometimes wonder, if the world is so doomed to sinfulness, why we ever bring more people into it."—"That also is our curse."—"O, come, mother, the angel appeared to Abraham and assured him that his seed should be as the sands of the sea-shore and he was quite pleased about it, and you have fought like a tigress for your own five."—"There are consolations," said Margaret, "and the New Testament has made a great difference."

That sent Jamie to the New Testament and with this and his father's sermons he spent some weeks until the news came of John's return to England and landing at Plymouth. The New Testament certainly did something to relieve the stoic pessimism of the Old, which no one but the Jews could have endured, but it produced confusion. It gave relief but only at the cost of sacrifice. There was still the same belief in the impossibility of

happiness after childhood and the same rigorous exclusion of the ordinary mechanism of life as a means to happiness. It seemed to Jamie that the Reverened T. Lawrie, his father, had avoided the exclusion by escaping into a private little poetic joy of his own which he had vainly tried to express in the conventional terminology and the legend of the religion he professed. There were passages concerning flowers and mountains and running water which were purely poetic in feeling and entirely free of the taint of the religion which forbade all immediate joy and under pretence of redressing meanness and ugliness and brutality sanctioned them. It was quite clear to Jamie that his father's faith had been entirely different from its letter and far removed from Margaret's, who looked for and accepted the ugliness in all things and really believed that her sufferings would be rewarded hereafter. The Rev. T. Lawrie on the other hand had his sufferings immediately rewarded but never succeeded in sharing his reward with another living soul. His sermons were a strange combination of conventional damnations and blastings and natural ecstasy. As he read them Jamie understood himself better and other people rather less, inasmuch as he began to find excuses for them. It was simply that he was no longer frightened of his ideas, and could abstract them and did not need to use people as symbols for them. Many of his obsessions faded and he was more open to common affection.

He was very eager to see John again. Quite unreasonably he hoped for great things from him, who had been over the wide world, and had travelled in far lands where the sun shone unimaginably for weeks together and peaches were so common that they were given to the pigs for food. John was to be in some sort a proof

that Thrigsby was wrong. This idea had come from Tom, who had been greatly upset by his younger brother's success, not as success but as an assertion that there was money elsewhere than in Thrigsby and that there were other praiseworthy means of becoming rich than by being a Thrigsby merchant. This it was impossible for Tom to admit. He despised two things: aristocracy and speculation. It was wrong in his eyes to be born rich or to acquire riches suddenly, for wealth was to him evidence of character. A poor man was a man who had something radically wrong with him, but a duke or a speculator could be rich and yet possessed of nothing but luck or cunning. To Jamie such ideas were repulsive and he looked to John for refutation of them. He imagined John returning like a nabob, splendidly generous and putting to shame the screwing and scraping and hoarding that went on in Thrigsby with its prematurely elderly gentlemen all bent on proving their character by their banking accounts. What made the situation particularly acute was that Tom had docked half the allowance he had made to his mother on the score of growing expense and with the excuse that the household was really Jamie's, who as a single man could well afford it.

John arrived and Jamie met him at the station, but did not recognise him. Sophia had altered very little. She had two boys, Angus and David, and a Portuguese nurse, picked up in Madeira, who carried a baby in her arms. A tubby little man was standing near them. He had a beard and wore broadcloth and looked like a Thrigsbeian tradesman waiting for his wife. This was John. He recognised his brother and came forward. Jamie stared at him and could not conceal his disappointment. This was another and a lesser Tom. Where was the adventurer, the nabob, the rare traveller? And when

John spoke it was with a Scotch accent more pronounced than would be heard upon the lips of any Scot in his native land.—"Ye've no' cheenged, Jamie," he said.—"You've grown fat!" said Jamie, almost in a tone of horror.—"I should have known you anywhere," said Sophia. "This is Angus and this is David, and this is Maria. She doesn't speak a word of English and I don't know a word of Portuguese but she simply would not be parted from baby. She was just like a piece of luggage. She belonged to us and had to be packed."—"But I had to pay her passage just as much as if she'd been English," said John. Luggage, Maria and the children were sent off in one fly and Jamie and his relatives followed in another. John seemed actually to be pleased to be back in Thrigsby and remarked changes and remembered shops and landmarks.—"A bit different to our first coming to Thrigsby," he said. "There was nothing in the old place but you then; at least, for me."—"Then you can imagine what it was like for me," said Jamie, "coming here with nothing at all in front of me. I'm still looking for it."—He liked John for saying that. It was a taste of the old John and a little palliated the shock that he had had in seeing his brother come back as though it were only from the sea-side. However that relief was taken from him for John said: "You little thought then that I should be the rolling stone of the family. But sometimes it's the rolling stone that gathers the moss, eh, Sophia?" And Sophia said: "I don't suppose your mother will look for any. She won't care so long as you roll back to her."

Indeed when they reached home they found Margaret strangely excited but having herself under tight control. She was arrayed in her best and had tea ready. She received John's kisses almost absently. Her eyes were

for her grandchildren, the two sturdy little Lawries and the plump brown baby. The boys had been instructed to bob to their grandmamma as lords bob to the Queen. Margaret was delighted with them and Jamie felt annoyed with John for not taking a more obvious pride in his sons. After all, they were his real treasure and Margaret's instinct, as usual, was perfectly right. Sophia was blissfully happy, but John looked rather morose as though this was not quite what he had expected. He stood gazing round the room, taking in its contents, and his eyes were rather contemptuous. Maria stood dandling the baby with a wide grin on her mahogany-coloured face, and her strong white teeth flashing. Margaret spoke to her and she broke into a torrent of Portuguese.—"O!" said Margaret, "I hope she is not a papist."—"There are no Protestants in Madeira," said Sophia apologetically.

The children were removed, Tibby taking charge of them and Maria.—"Of course," said Margaret, "you will send her back as soon as you are settled here."—"I don't think you'll get her to go until the baby can walk," said Jamie.—Sophia cried: "Why, Jamie, what do you know about it?"—"Not much," he said, "but I fancy I know something about Maria."—"More than I do," John threw in. "I only know that she is an infernal nuisance and eats as much as an elephant."—"Do they have elephants in Australia?" asked Margaret, by way of making conversation easier.—"Of course they don't," answered John. "That's India. In Australia they have emus, kangaroos, wallabies and black swans and no other wild animals. It is a beastly place and I don't wish to talk about it."—"But we expected you to talk, John. We stay-at-homes have nothing to tell, except what I have already told you in my letters. You heard about Tom

and Agnes and really nothing much else has happened. We want to hear what you intend to do."—"That depends on Sophia," said John. "She's a regular Greig and can't bear to be parted from her family and wants me to build near them. We have promised to go up there next week to stay and see what can be done about it."—"Next week?" asked Margaret a little querulously. "I hoped you would make a longer stay than that."—John's eyes roved disapprovingly round the room. It was obvious that he had no intention of staying.—"I want to settle down," he said. "The sooner the better. I've been thinking out in Australia and it is obvious to me that England has to look for her future to the middle classes, at least to those members of it who are rich enough to have leisure without the false position which ruins the aristocracy. If I am well enough I should like to stand for parliament. If I am not I shall devote myself to the study of politics. I am convinced that unless the middle classes take the trouble to understand politics there will be a revolution. Palmerston's policy has been the ruination of the country and we are taking on more than we can safely deal with. What England wants is safety and the only safe people in it are the middle classes. It is high time we had a Prime Minister without a title."—Margaret and Jamie exchanged bewildered glances. Had the family produced a bore? That was the uneasy suspicion that flashed across Jamie's mind. If sun and peaches produced that effect, better the smoke and gloom of Thrigsby.—John went on: "Bright was always my man, you know. Cobden and Bright set the country on the right road and it is simply disastrous that the aristocracy are still allowed to have any say in the government."—"What I want to know is," said Jamie, "do kangaroos really carry their young

in a pouch and is it true that they can be taught to box?" —Sophia gave a wild giggle.—"Not that I ever heard of," said John solemnly, "but they kick like a Frenchman. And that's another thing that I cannot abide, this toadying to Louis Napoleon. I should have thought Europe had had enough of that family."—"Who is Louis Napoleon?" asked Jamie, and John gasped, stared, appreciated the snub and was angrily silent.—"Sophia dear," said Margaret, "do tell me if you are glad to be back in England."—"Glad is not the word for it. You can't imagine what it means to come back and see green fields and hedges and a soft blue sky full of wonderful great clouds. You need to have been in a place where the sky is hot and hard and for months on end there is never any rain. Everything else seems hard and uncomfortable. It can't be home where there is no softness and gentleness."—John interrupted this charming lyrical praise of England.—"What strikes me about England," he said, "is that she is asleep."—"You won't think that if you try to do business with an Englishman," said Jamie.—"I have no intention of doing business," retorted John, "and my experience of people is that they are quite capable of doing business in their sleep; that is, without being awake to the serious problems of life." At this point Margaret seemed to realise that this was not the John of her dreams and expectations. She had looked for a long-lost son to come back grateful, burdened with experiences and riches to the bosom of the family which had sent him forth. It was slowly being borne in upon her that John had not a thought in his head for the family. She might have known that. Had it been otherwise, he could not have given his children a popish nurse. With less dismay and more excitement Jamie had become aware of the

same thing. John was not a bore, he was a phenomenon. After all, why should he expect John to regard the family with more respect than himself, to whom it no longer existed as at once the condition and the object of life? He could not altogether ignore it as John seemed to do.—"What are the serious problems of life?" he asked.—"The development of a democratic government without the tyranny of the mob. That is the first and it contains all the rest."—"I don't think," replied Jamie, "that you will find a single woman in the world to agree with you."—"Women," said John, "are not concerned with the serious problems of life."—"Mother's fingers are simply itching to smack you," said Jamie and at that even John laughed and Margaret joined in, and at last the party felt at their ease. Sophia chattered away, told stories of the children, described their life in Australia in a house built of wood, their dismay when they had the news of Murdoch's failure, and how quietly John took it all, the excitement of the gold rush, the long voyage home and their stay in the paradise of Madeira. Jamie warmed to her. She seemed to him the most delightful woman he had ever met, so human and good, and because good, beautiful. She was not at all exciting, but was immensely satisfying: a little bovine, but she had what he had hardly met in a woman before, absolute physical contentment. Warmth came from her and it was clear that to her marriage was a blessed state. That was to John's credit, and from that Jamie began to appreciate his brother's honesty and entire lack of pretension. John had not changed so much as he had thought. Always blunt and straightforward he had simply ignored everything in his way that threatened to prevent his being so.

Later on when the brothers talked together Jamie

found that John had without a tremor discarded the idea of the family, religion, every pretence of superiority either as man or Englishman as hindrances to the practical genial happiness of his desire. He had become an out-and-out Darwinian and to him man was but an animal who could outwit all other animals and maintain himself in ease and security all his days, loving his wife, his children and his occupation until, full of years and blessings, he died and was forgotten. No immortality for John: mortality was quite enough for him and he only required that it should be decent and orderly. At first Jamie envied him and thought he had found the way of peace, but before long he was in revolt. John's way was intolerably dull and his ideal of comfort seemed ludicrous. One little particle of envy remained with him and the night before John's departure for the Greigs' Jamie confided that if he could find another woman like Sophia he would marry her.—"Oh!" said John, "but Sophias do not grow on every bush."

CHAPTER XXXV

A LETTER FROM ROME

A LARGE package arrived from Italy. It contained sketches of the Austrian Tyrol and the Alps painted by Mary on the top of the diligence as she went by easy stages from Berlin to Florence. She wrote:

"One thing only in your letters worries me, dearest Jamie. They grow more and more theoretical, without being abstract. You probably won't know what I mean. I have already torn up seven letters to you. All the time as I travelled I was obsessed by a feeling that you were unhappy, but as your letters never contain any hint of it I must conclude that it was hallucination on my part. Yet it was very real. I sometimes have a kind of fury that you are not with me. Seeing that you are not married there seems no reason why you should not be. There have been cases like that of a brother and a sister finding more through each other than they ever could have done through anybody else. They are to each other like the arch in some of the pictures here; through which one is shown a most lovely landscape. I confess that what I see through you I do not altogether like. I have been so long away from home and perhaps I have lost touch with you and can only see what you are willing to let me see. If I were

in touch with you, I should see more than you would be aware of. I am not at all to be envied. You try living among foreigners, away from those you love, and living on letters. It is not far short of starvation. I have had my days of real physical starvation, for I have sometimes been miserably poor, but that is nothing to it. Please realise that and write to me more often, more humanly and less theoretically. What do I care whether the family is dying in England and religion is going the way of all flesh and the English are most dangerously exposed to evil? Mammon, Moloch, Beelzebub, Ahriman and the rest of them may take the lot of them and I sha'n't care. I can't love a nation: and I can and do love you and very much care whether you are or are not well, happy, contented in mind and body, but most of all in mind, for you have a mind and are the only member of the family who has, but it is always worrying about other people's affairs. That is, I know, because you are so sympathetic and simply cannot help living in other people's lives, but to do that you must not mind their being horrid. If they are horrid it is because they like it, and neither can nor want to be any better. Tom likes money. He gets money. John likes comfort and he gets comfort. Mother likes God and she gets God, and none of them can understand anybody liking anything else but their own particular little thing. I don't quite know what you like but I am quite sure that you don't like it for its own sake, but because it leads you on to liberty or heaven or whatever you like to call it. If you could be here you would understand yourself. I'm sending you some of my badly drawn sketches so that you can see for yourself. May they bring some light into your dark, dirty Thrigsby! Italy means light! Goethe said

that or something like it. Italy means Garibaldi and Mazzini, and the Risorgimento, which will mean in the end politicians, but to have had two men like that is a great deal, and I dislike England for being sentimental about them. You can't think how funny England seems at this distance, patronising a man like Garibaldi, assuring him that she is free and that she will be only too glad if he can make Italy like her. And when the English say that they are free then I think of you and Thrigsby; great machines and tall chimneys belching smoke; and I compare that with the freedom that is already in the heart and mind of a man like Garibaldi. I have been reading Carlyle and Ruskin and I know that a country which has roused such burning indignation cannot be free. But clearly the English believe themselves to be free and the odd thing is that they persuade other countries that they are so. The men I meet here believe it, and it was just the same in Germany. I suppose they mean that we don't have soldiers clanking and clattering about everywhere. I suppose it was annoying to have the Austrians in Milan, but I'm becoming a cosmopolitan and don't think one kind of person is better than another. So long as I have a crust of bread and one spare gown and a roof over my head I don't care where I am. If only everybody would agree about that there wouldn't be any soldiers, for there would be plenty of room for all of us and there would be nothing to fight about. They say here that there is going to be war in America. I can't imagine why. Surely there is room for everybody there. But I suppose the Americans, no more than the Europeans, don't think as I do. I am like Goethe, a good European, and I believe nothing matters but civilisation, and I believe in that because it makes possible the kind of

life I like. I expect the truth of the matter is that most people dislike civilisation because it means restraint, and so this general dislike expresses itself in a number of particular little dislikes, which gather into something that is far more dangerous than hatred, namely a superstitious jealousy. I think I agree with you about the God-myth having become hopelessly inadequate under modern conditions and that the family goes with it. It is all very difficult. Life does suddenly seem to have become more difficult, but surely all the better for that. I suppose there will always be myths but the thing to avoid is the giving of authority to a myth. One wants belief, for life must have a structure, but if evolution is true, as I think it is, then each individual may be trusted to make his own structure to convey and carry whatever it may be that he desires. Selfishness makes structure impossible. That is why ready-made structures are in the end always broken down. With every man free to make his own structure, selfishness would be gradually squeezed out. Evolution has given a new meaning to liberty as to everything else and I suppose none of us yet realises one-tenth of all that it does mean. I think Darwin is far more the saviour of England than ever Nelson was, for he has saved her from herself, which was much more difficult than saving her from Napoleon. I find, and I daresay you do too, that evolution has given a new meaning to poetry, and, oddly enough, also to the Bible, which I have been reading again. It is quite wonderful but it makes me feel ashamed of myself for I realise that I have read the poets for their words and not for their poetry. That is my chief comfort here. I have not yet found any work to do, and am again poor, but living with a lovely view over roofs to the dome of St. Peter's.

I have been ill: Roman fever. Therefore I cannot write a long letter and the sketches must tell you all the wonders of my journey here. I shall stay until I can speak Italian and have read Dante and then with two languages and my school French I shall seek employment in England. My heart is in Edinburgh, but I could not bear to live there again. Please keep the sketches and when you write send me some sort of picture or photograph of yourself. Get Agnes to draw you. She has a real talent. I feel very sorry for her and Tom. It must be most disappointing to them to have no children, and especially hard with John's boys so fine and jolly. I hope John's comfort will not stifle them but he is sensible and will bring them up well. If you could see the children here! You would be envious of Italian women. At least I am. The Spirito Santo must have had something to do with them. They say it is the Spirito Santo when a priest is the father!"

CHAPTER XXXVI

MRS. ELIAS BROADBENT

FOR once in a way Jamie's expectations were fulfilled and there was a great change brought about by John's return, though it came rather from Sophia. Indeed with John there was soon a breach. Jamie was anxious that provision should be made for his mother's old age and wished to draw up some scheme by which the three of them should begin at once to contribute. Tom had refused to have anything to do with it and John, when he was sounded, shared Tom's view that as long as Jamie lived with their mother it was his affair and there was no need for further thought. Margaret kept his house for him and was therefore entitled to a home at his expense. Tom had even gone so far as to hint that his elder brother was trying to shirk his responsibilities and he gave John a most lurid account of Jamie's loose and extravagant private life. In that account Jamie figured as a minor Heliogabalus. Sophia, however, knew better, and always defended her brother-in-law, in whom she had the sympathy which John, in spite of his many virtues as a husband, lacked. Jamie could delight in her children even as she did. He could understand that they were a part of herself, that the baby was still an essential piece of her physical existence, that she lived through them and was only the more herself

for it. He could be a child with the children—(he had learned that from Mrs. Leslie)—and she found soon that he was almost like another child to her, and could be so without loss of dignity or hurt to his vanity. He saw and allowed her own dignity as a woman practising her womanhood and revelling in it without coquetry. He could idealise her without making her inaccessible, without diminishing her humanity, and for the first time there was room in his world for woman, who had been hitherto, so almost monastic had been his life, only an exasperation and an obsession. She was entirely frank with him as no woman had ever been, entirely without that vain teasing which makes frankness impossible. She accepted her husband's dictum that women have nothing to do with the important problems of life because she was unaware of any problem. All her desires had easily and naturally been satisfied and, since it had been so easy and natural, other people's desires could equally be satisfied. She had so much that it seemed to her unreasonable and foolish to distract herself by worrying because she had not something more, and because she found something more in James, she did not, for that, think ill of John. Indeed Jamie only made her the more aware of what she had and more grateful for it. She was sorry for him. The house seemed so empty to her. It was just a house in which he ate and slept and it was on the whole uncomfortable. It lacked all the little graces that a woman who loved him could have brought into it. She thought him very wonderful and because he was that he needed such graces. There was trouble with Tibby who did not at all like being told that she must prepare a more dainty table and give more attention to the cleanliness of the linen and provide a greater variety of food. Sophia did not appreciate

Tibby's position in the household and criticised her work with no regard for her feelings. As if Tibby did not know exactly what Jamie liked and disliked! However she bottled up her feelings and only let them loose upon the Portuguese with whom she had managed somehow to break down the barrier of language. Tibby was alarmed. It was clear to her that John and Tom were better fed than Jamie, whose alliance with Sophia was also disturbing.—"Never once has he complained," said Tibby.—"And never would," returned Sophia. "I am sure you do your best, but, believe me, I know what men like."—"What's meat to one is poison to another," protested Tibby.—"Certainly, but there are little things that they all like, and they make all the difference. It is not so much in the cooking as in the serving, nor so much in the cleaning as in the arranging."—"It is small use arranging for Jamie," said Tibby, "for an untidier man there never was."

Sophia went away feeling that she would never rest content until she had taken Jamie away from that house. Margaret obviously wished it to be like a Scots manse, bare and frugal, and Jamie was not a Scots minister, but a hard-working man blessed or cursed with a rarely sensitive nature.—"He must marry," said Sophia. "It is perfectly absurd that he is not married, and perfectly wicked of those two women to keep their claws in him."

To think of a thing was for Sophia to do it. She never went out without looking at every young woman she met and wondering if she would do, regarding them from every point of view, the natural, the physical, the æsthetic, the practical. There was no nonsense about Sophia: a wife must be pleasing, healthy, happy and sensible. Jamie's wife must be young, amiable, and strong: young, because he was in many ways too old,

amiable, because he had moods, strong, because he was nervous, and with a nervous woman might produce unhealthy and abnormal children, and children were absolutely necessary for him. So eager was Sophia in this search that she postponed her visit to the Greigs' three times and at last sent John off without her, making as an excuse that she had found a very good doctor who wished to have her under his eye for some time longer—(she had had a very difficult time with the baby in Madeira and had had no proper attendance, and there were after-effects which might or might not be serious). This doctor, Elias Broadbent, it transpired, had married the mother of a school friend of Sophia's, Belle Wood, and Belle, hearing of her, arranged a meeting and brought with her her young sister, Catherine, a girl of eighteen. No sooner did Sophia set eyes on Catherine than she decided that here was the wife for Jamie. The girl was beautiful: tall, fair, radiant with health and of an obvious innocence and purity, placid and immobile. She was neither awkward nor shy, but always at her ease, if anything lazy because she was so certain of giving pleasure with her beauty. Belle on the other hand was a plump little chatterbox, full of wiles and flattery, extremely vain and obviously a little anxious at being left unmarried. She was consumed with interest in Sophia's marriage, her children, her husband, her voyage to the antipodes, but for all Belle's efforts, Sophia could not keep her attention from the younger sister and she saw then that Belle was afraid of this beautiful rival and hated her. Belle was full of grievances and conveyed, without actually saying it, the idea that she had been greatly wronged. She had had many offers but just at the time her mother had been preoccupied with catching Dr. Broadbent, and no young man had had the temerity

to approach her. It was with an amazing skill that Belle laid bare the whole story of her wrongs so that not a word of it should be intelligible to Catherine. Sophia felt that she was possessed of every detail. She was so sympathetic and kindly that Belle invited her most pressingly to come and see her at home and to make the acquaintance of her mother.

Mrs. Elias Broadbent was a formidable woman, large, with a greedy mouth and hard eyes that shone like polished pebbles. She was the daughter of an Archdeacon, a Northrop, and she let Sophia know within five minutes that the Northrops had their seat in Yorkshire and she had been married very young to Mr. Wood, one of the Warwickshire Woods, and she had been left a widow and had remained so for many years because there were so few gentlemen in Thrigsby. She was swollen with pride over her capture of Dr. Broadbent who was one of the leading physicians of the town.—"And how interesting that you were at school with Belle, Mrs. Lawrence."—"Lawrie," said Sophia. "The Lawries are well known in Thrigsby, though not so well known as my own family, the Greigs."—Greig! The name worked wonders. Mrs. Broadbent welcomed Sophia as an equal. Her husband had attended Donald Greig through a long and dangerous illness, and, as a matter of fact, it had been through Angus Greig that the doctor had made his reputation.

In her mother's presence Belle was no longer a chatterbox. She was almost as silent as Catherine, and it was patent that the two young women had no kind of interest for their mother, who was entirely absorbed in her new life and rather resented her children as reminders that there had ever been any other. Tea was brought in, with muffins and three varieties of rich

cake. Mrs. Broadbent ate three muffins and two slices of cake and gave herself up to the pleasure of eating. The younger women hardly touched a morsel, but sat like ministrants while Mrs. Broadbent, almost like a priestess, accomplished the ceremony of the meal.—"If this is tea," thought Sophia, "what must dinner be like?"—Then her mind began to play about Catherine, for whom she felt vaguely sorry, to be so young, so lovely and so cruelly neglected. Thinking of her in connection with her purpose, Catherine seemed like a ripe plum on a wall that would come off at a touch.

Sophia was always liked by women and she was urged to come again. She explained that she was staying with her mother-in-law and hoped Mrs. Broadbent would call.

A week later Mrs. Broadbent called and, with her, Belle. It was on a Saturday and Jamie was in, having brought Fanny to her periodical tea-party with Tibby in the kitchen. Belle had made inquiries about Jamie and had heard much to his credit and set herself to tickle his vanity and to attract him. But he detested her coquetry and even more he hated Mrs. Broadbent who sat with a hard wandering eye taking in the bare furniture and heavily patronising Margaret, who fascinated her, as a woman who had cherished her widowhood and tended it most lovingly. The atmosphere awed Mrs. Broadbent. She was sensitive to its aristocratic quality and drank it in greedily. It was so acute a pleasure to her that she almost ignored the food that was set before her.

To Jamie the woman was a living offence and as soon as he could he made excuses and escaped. He was very angry with Sophia and reproached her bitterly. Sophia replied: "She is not so bad as all that. She simply doesn't matter. I asked her because I wanted

you to know the Doctor who is a really interesting man, a man of science, who would be very good for you. And he is interested in you, besides. I hoped she would bring her younger daughter who is a great beauty, a lovely creature and most unhappy, as you can imagine with a mother like that." The mention of beauty in distress caught Jamie's attention as it was intended that it should.—"If she is anything like her mother," he said, "she cannot be beautiful and girls always grow like their mothers in twenty years' time."—"She is not at all like her mother," answered Sophia, "and she is a perfect angel, for, though she suffers a real martyrdom, she is entirely unspoiled and needs nothing but friendship. If she could meet your mother I am sure it would make all the difference in the world to her."

The next move was that Sophia brought the Doctor home with her one evening, with the result that he and Jamie sat up until two in the morning, Jamie thrilled with the pleasure of meeting a man of ideas and skilled mind (though it made him feel hopelessly muddle-headed) and the Doctor delighted to find a young and eager mental curiosity prepared to discuss science without reference to theology. The views of each were complementary to those of the other and each felt that at last he had met a thoroughly sensible man. Their conversation was entirely abstract and impersonal and very exciting so that Jamie was eager for more and eagerly accepted an invitation to dine at the Doctor's house on the following Tuesday.

He forgot to make a note of the exact time and arrived half-an-hour early. The Doctor was out. Mrs. Broadbent was dressing and asked Belle to go down. Belle knew that Jamie was hopeless for herself: also she disliked any man who was impervious to her coquetry: and

she sent Catherine, a radiant vision in pale blue. She introduced herself:—"I'm the younger Miss Wood," she said. "My mother will be down soon."—So this was the beauty! Jamie was dazzled by her. His blood went singing in his veins for the sheer joyous delight of her. He held her hand for a full minute in the oblivious happiness that he had in saluting her beauty, in the pure freshness with which it filled him like the air of a spring morning.—"You must excuse me," she said, "if I do not entertain you very well, but I have only just begun to meet people and I do not know yet what they talk about."—"If they are friends," said he, "it does not matter much what they talk about, and if they are not friends they need not talk at all."—She responded instantly to the kindness in his voice and she accepted the whole-hearted homage in his eyes. She was used to homage, but of a furtive and unwilling kind. With this went the whole nature of the man in absolute simplicity. All the seeds of warm human love that had been planted in him during his days with Sophia grew up to flower, and Catherine became at once an image of that love. Her beauty was worthy of it, spiritualised it, rid it of the excessive comfort which in Sophia had oppressed him. That gone, he was, on the instant, in love. His whole force was concentrated on the girl and he was entirely, deliciously happy and reckless, sensitive to her innocence, instinctively careful lest anything in his feelings should hurt her or rouse her too suddenly. He rejoiced too in the chill of her modesty. O! to melt her, to waken her, to set her spirit free, to catch her soul and never let it go. At once he was her wooer most supple and most skilful, not dreaming of success or failure, not caring what might come, but absorbed wholly in his own immediate surrender, in the joy of

the wooing. It mattered nothing what he said to her. The barest words formed a song, and her voice, her gesture, her smile were more beguilement for his heart. In one moment all his straining after love, after life, after creative consciousness of life was snapped. He was in a lovely ecstasy, hovering nearer and nearer to beauty. Catherine spoke no word, made no movement, but he at once translated it into evidence of her perfection, and nothing could mar the pure delight of that evening. He found Mrs. Broadbent vastly amusing and indeed when she could give vent to her malice she could be witty. He flirted openly with Belle since it was plain to both of them that it was nothing but nonsense and such flirtation was a good outlet for the fun that frothed up in him. How delicious the food was, how good the wine, how charming the gleaming tablecloth, the shining white plates and the sparkling glass and silver! The table floated before him and he half expected it to be spirited away like the feast of the Barmecide. Indeed that seemed to have happened when he was left alone with the Doctor and had to listen to talk about comparative osteology and the evolution of bone structures. What did it matter to him that the bear and the horse were most nearly akin, or that either was in the least like man? What did it matter that he had bones himself, and, if he had, why talk about it? Bones did their work well enough in carrying the body about, and if they broke there were doctors to mend them, and that being so, why was not this particular doctor away about his business?

Dr. Broadbent drew his own conclusions and smiled at the alacrity with which Jamie sprang to his feet when he said: "Shall we join the ladies?" He was also a little distressed, for he had thought Jamie a sensible

man and had expected him to share his own cynical but thoroughly healthy attitude of approval of the arrangements provided for the continuance of the race. And lo! Jamie had lost his head like any young moon-calf.

When that night he confided his impression to his wife she remarked:—"It would be a very good thing. Katy wants a man of character to knock the nonsense out of her, and he is certainly very good-looking."

At once Mrs. Broadbent informed Belle and Belle told Sophia, and the three of them laboured in the good cause, arranging that Jamie should be left alone with Catherine, who received his attentions unmoved and as a matter of course. She was of a slow nature and could not easily grasp a new idea, but she accepted Jamie's wooing. It was certainly very pleasant to be with him and he was kinder to her than anybody had ever been. But until he felt that she was moved he could not speak his love to her. He waited, to the exasperated fury of Mrs. Broadbent, Belle and Sophia. Mrs. Broadbent and Belle set themselves to make Catherine's life a hell to her and concentrated themselves on the task of driving her out of the house. Once they were assured that they had Jamie's arms to drive her into they had no compunction about it. Both were jealous of the beauty, Belle for reasons already stated, and Mrs. Broadbent because the Doctor was more appreciative of her daughter than she liked.

At last one day, when Jamie had been more tender than usual, Catherine burst into tears and when he comforted her, petted her, patted her head and stroked her pretty hair, she told him that her life was a perfect misery to her. Then he could refrain no longer and poured out his love for her and said he would love her always and protect her and be good to her and she must

love him and they would be happy together. She clung to him and he kissed her and she accepted his kiss as a child might, and it seemed to him then, in his mood of passionate chivalry, right that perfect beauty should so accept his kiss.

A few minutes later Mrs. Broadbent entered the room and was informed that he wished to be engaged to her daughter and to be married immediately. She already had exact knowledge of his material condition and prospects, mopped at her eyes, took him to her capacious bosom and, to his astonished horror, kissed him. Catherine rushed weeping to her room, and he was left feeling extraordinarily foolish. All the elation passed from him to Mrs. Broadbent, Belle, and Sophia. Catherine was now as much petted as before she had been bullied. He was hardly allowed access to her. The date of the wedding was fixed. Sophia took charge of him and made him take a house, far removed from Margaret, and furnish it. When he was not being worried by Sophia he had to cope with the thousand and one suggestions put forward by his mother. Scarcely had his mother let him go than Agnes pounced on him with advice, and hardly had Agnes turned her back than he found that he had to deal with lawyers and go into the complicated maze of a settlement, and that settlement had to be agreed with other lawyers representing Catherine's small inheritance from her grandfather. Then he had to meet four families of the Woods and five of the Northrops, not to mention a Broadbent or two. And Catherine on her side was so bewildered that he was unable to get two sensible remarks from her in a month, so that at last he was driven to take refuge in science and philosophy with the Doctor. That had the unfortunate effect of clearing his brain so that he began to take a detached

view of his marriage. Certainly he loved Catherine, but he resented the indubitable fact that marriage had already interfered with its natural course, namely the lovely wooing of the woman in a world that because of it had become all fun and beauty, all blossom and sweet scents and sunshine all aquiver and sweeter than honey: an entire forgetfulness of all save the body, which had become light as thistledown, hovering in constant glee upon the warm winds of love, blowing through it so that it trembled, both from the ecstasy of the gentle movement and from the inward knowledge of the sacrificial sacrament that was to come. And all that had been broken down, the blossoms were trampled underfoot, the body's ecstasy was chilled, and every human being round them shut them out and busily prepared to isolate them for ever, to kill the ecstasy, to rob it of the light, to deny it access to the world that through the woman it loved so passionately. As his mind was cleared again Jamie knew it, knew that his ecstasy was being denied and utterly ignored. He knew Sophia what she was, a woman living in the flesh, and he hated her for it. She had wakened desire in him and quite calmly would see it die because she knew no other desire than the desire of the flesh. She ached with that desire and she had her man to satisfy it. Her breasts ached to give suck and she had her children to satisfy that. Ah! there was the evil that he had felt so menacing; not money, not meanness, not ugliness, not any trivial lust nor any blundering folly, but the callous confinement of desire to the flesh, so that all was pleasure and nowhere any joy. Yet he loved Catherine and would not surrender his idea of her beauty for which, in offering, he had nothing but his ecstasy, for nothing else was worthy. And that was perishing for lack of sustenance. Cath-

erine was always with Sophia, who would poison her, or with that vile old woman, her mother. He wished to go to her as a bridegroom to his bride and in all these preparations he could see nothing but the base delivery of a slave to her master. Again and again he would tell himself that joy must live, that nothing can kill joy.—Can joy live if it be denied? And what was there anywhere in his surroundings that did not deny it? Only his mother with her joy pent up in the dim hope and misty promise of Heaven, and the children with their little joy still unaware of denial.

He wrote every day to Catherine and as he grew desperate poured out his ecstasy in poems, but her letters were few and unavailing for she could express little on paper.

As the time drew near one idea, one image grew in his mind, the figure of Tibby, formed out of the few glances he caught from her. She was a figure of silent sorrow, gazing down upon him with eyes full of wisdom and a clear knowledge past understanding. Like a strange woman looming out of darkness she was and there was in her a feeling that crept into the marrow of his bones. Once or twice she was so real to him that he thought it must be she and he said: "What do you want, Tibby?" And then she vanished. At last he learned not to speak, and dared to meet her eyes and to let the feeling in her go racking through him. It racked through him and crept into his poor starving ecstasy and passed through it and grew into something beyond agony, beyond all joy, into clear knowledge of the equal and unending strife between good and evil. Then he was flung back into consciousness and left to take up his ecstasy, his dread, his hatred of the evil that denied his joy as the implement of his life, the instrument where-

with his emotions must shape his love and give it grace. Strangely as he toiled back into this smaller consciousness the figure of Tibby lost its strangeness and darkness fell away from it and she appeared more like the Tibby of every day. And every day he was acutely aware of her, a figure of silent sorrow. Most plainly she was suffering and he could not endure the thought of it.

On the night before his wedding he went down to the kitchen. He found Tibby asleep. He stood in the doorway and watched her. The shadows fell queerly upon her face and turned it into a grotesque. It was like a mask of suffering. The deepset eyes were like black holes. There were deep shadows under her high cheekbones. He thought for one horrid moment that she was dead. Could death look so strong, could there be so fierce a will in death? Her lips parted and she moaned a little, and slowly she raised her right arm and drew it across her eyes. Then her arm fell again and her hand dropped into her lap. He watched her and her breathing came heavily. He thought, without pity, simply, of her life. Day in, day out, drudging, serving faithfully an old woman and a foolish man, keeping them from the distasteful practices of daily life, with little thanks and rare words of encouragement, even of recognition. Ugly, uncouth, of a type to call down upon herself the laughter of unworthy men. Yet there was a rare spirit in her and an indomitable pride, that should, surely, have been broken by such a life. As she lay sleeping and he watched her, he saw in her face a beauty such as he had seen upon no other face, a serenity, a clear exalted dignity, a lovely proud purity, a confident knowledge whereby that which had come to him in his agony seemed small indeed. There was no

room for pity, no need for it, none for love, as he had known it, none for that ecstasy which had seemed to thrill through all the world. These things were passing and of time. There was in Tibby, in that strange mask of hers, the sure knowledge of the omnipotence of love. She opened her eyes and a veiled light shone in them. As she saw him the veil was dropped and the light blazed. She did not move. She made no sound. He knew that she loved him and that he loved her, and that their love would make two worlds, his in the likeness of marriage, citizenship, success or failure, and such-like things; and hers grey, dull, monotonous and beyond all hope of change.—"I wanted to say good-bye to you, Tibby," said he.—"Good-bye, Jamie," said she.—She folded her hands in her lap, turned her head with a jerk, as though it needed some violence to take her eyes from his, and gazed into the glowing fire. The lamp on the table flickered and died out. He lingered for a moment. She was no longer a figure of sorrow but of patience. She needed neither comfort nor pity. There was no emptiness in her life, but the enduring peace of knowledge in innocence.—"Good-night, Tibby," he said.—"Good-night," said she. He drew the door to but could not bear to shut it. He felt that she was with him, and would be with him whatever might befall. As he turned away he found that he was trembling and could hardly walk. He groped his way back along the passage, back to the duty and the joy that awaited him in life, in the life that could take cognisable tangible shape, the comic life of every day.

CHAPTER XXXVII

CATHERINE

SO he was married. Catherine was delivered over to him by her stepfather, with the priest as intermediary. It was extraordinarily like a commercial transaction, with amazing complications to transfer the goods from the producer to the consumer, and the middleman taking more profit than his services seemed to entitle him to. Jamie thought of that in the middle of the service and the whole affair which till then had been depressing and vulgar became splendid farce. Here was the business with which plays and novels were usually rounded off actually happening to himself and the fun was only just beginning. Were he and Catherine going to live happily ever after? He hoped so, but he had his doubts. He did not at all agree with the tone of the marriage service which was as blunt and cynical as a bill of lading. Catherine was heavily veiled and orange-blossomed and so dressed as to look as little like a woman as possible. He disliked the phrase "wedded wife," which sounded heavy and ominous. Certainly he was in a difficult and fastidious mood, but he knew what he felt and he disliked his feelings being interfered with by inappropriate and ponderous sounds. In Scotland he could have had the matter over in a few moments by the holding out of his hand and the clear expression

of his intention to live with the woman as his wife. These English were so pompous. They could do, say and think nothing without insisting on its importance, for no other reason than that it was they who were doing, saying and thinking it. They had always been devastating to his feelings, and here in the face of one of the most cherished of their institutions he began to understand why. It was simply that they had no notion of adjusting the means to an end, and became so entangled in the means they employed that they lost sight of the end altogether. He did not yet desire Catherine as a wife. That might be, and again it might not. He had thought the matter over carefully. Marriage was to him a sacrament. He was quite clear about that. It meant the coming of the bridegroom to the bride, with all its mortal consequences, the fruition or the death of love. To these people marriage was only a contract, and, as the contract was indissoluble, it was a means so bungled that it had become an end. That was why novels and plays were rounded off with it, because the English were so entangled in their means that they could look no further. They were entangled in marriage just as they were entangled in commerce and in Empire. What on earth had happened to them, thought Jamie, as he walked, hurt and bewildered, from the altar steps to the vestry—what had happened to them since Shakespeare had rounded off the *Midsummer-Night's Dream* with a marriage wherein were united labour, intellect and fairyland? The marriages of Theseus and Hippolyte and of the Grecian lovers had helped him greatly in his approach to his own marriage. It should be a blessing of the sense, a kindling of the spirit, a mutual surrender and a new creation. And these people had made it as ugly as it could well be. They had

tricked out his bride until she looked like a figure off her own wedding cake; they were stolid in their demeanour and on the whole unhappy; the whole ceremony was gloomy and full of warnings and forebodings. Almost everything possible was done to rob him of his delight in Catherine. Why mention worldly goods? All that had been arranged by the lawyers, if there were any worldly goods. Why talk of sickness at such a time? Why drag in death? And why obedience? He had certainly no intention of commanding Catherine to do anything, and if she did not obey him he would have no remedy since there was no amending the contract. No, the marriage ceremony was muddle-headed, and, like the English who had evolved it, without purpose, unless it was their purpose to kill joy. He had noticed that trick of theirs. They could never believe themselves to be serious unless they were solemn. Perhaps, he thought, in a race of humorists that was inevitable.

He did not at all like these busy thoughts, but it was not his fault. The marriage ceremony would not admit his feelings and he must win through it as best he could and hope manfully that when at last he was allowed to take his bride away he would be able to obliterate the painful impressions of the past few weeks, and to wipe out all traces of Mrs. Broadbent, Belle and Sophia. As he drove away from the church with Catherine he was happy to find the ceremony becoming fantastic and amusing in his mind. He asked Catherine to remove her veil as he had not had a clear sight of her that day. She said she would wait until they got home. Jokingly he said: "I order you to take it off."—"Certainly not," she replied, and not another word passed between them until they reached the house. Then she was taken from him once more and he was left with his father-in-law,

his brother, and his mother.—"I shall miss you, dear Jamie," said Margaret, who had obviously been weeping quietly to herself.—"Miss him?" said Tom. "We're all going to look after you now."—"You're very good, Tom," said Margaret, "but somehow I never believed that Jamie would marry."—"It's never too late to settle down," replied Tom. "And I'm only too glad to do for his kitchen what he did for mine." So the talk went on, forced joviality with an undercurrent of lugubriousness that flung Jamie into a profound depression and made him wonder whether after all they were not in the right and he was in the wrong. Nearly everybody present, except Belle, was married, and they all had the air of being sorry for him even when they shook him by the hand or patted him on the back. He had a sense that they were all hostile to him, even his mother, and were crowding in upon him to make sure that he did not escape.

And Catherine? What had it all been to her? She appeared presently in a grey travelling costume. (The honeymoon was to be spent in London.) She kissed her mother and clung to her, shed tears upon her redoubtable bosom, kissed and clung to Belle, and pecked timidly at Margaret's cheek. Her stepfather kissed her full on the lips and she shrank from him.—"I'm ready, Jamie," said she, and he walked after her saying: "O my beautiful, I do thank God to escape." He took off his hat and lifted his face to the sky to feel the wind in his hair and the light upon his eyes. In the carriage he asked her: "Aren't you glad to escape?" and she replied: "I'm glad it's over. I was getting sick of all the excitement."—Said he: "I was beginning to think you might forget me altogether."—"Forget you, Jamie? How could I?" He felt a swift elation, a return of the

enchantment that had come upon him when he first saw her. On the threshold of her young life, his own, fantastic, absurd, confused and twisted, fell away from him. The glamour of her youth touched him and he was young again but without the torment of shyness and conceit that had so blurred his own boyhood. All things seemed possible then. He and she would live in the fair house of their love and they would fill it ingeniously with beauty so that no darkness could ever enter into it. This love of his was an active state, not a mere pleasant condition into which he sank. He was extremely wary of everything that was hostile to its activity and it was not long before he discovered hostility in his wife. She was charming and had a great capacity for enjoyment. Good company she was and easily pleased, but she yielded too readily to his emotions, and absorbed them, without being roused to activity. So it was with his thoughts. She received them too but never brought her own personality to bear on them so that he would find them in her mind, or she would give them forth again, unamended. It was like living in front of a mirror and it was abominable to him. He reminded himself that she was only a girl and told himself that he must be patient, but he was disappointed. He had expected marriage to have a transfiguring effect upon her, as indeed it had had so far as sensations went. Her capacity for mere physical companionship was enormously increased; she could taste almost to the full the satisfaction of having another human being near her. He could perceive a visible difference in her when he returned after a short absence. This new capacity in her augmented his and the act of living became a less airy and fantastic thing so that he lived less in his imagination and discovered innumerable small pleasures of sight and touch

and taste that had hitherto been hidden from him. These all made the honeymoon more and more delightful but less and less as the time approached did he relish returning to the task of building up the household in Thrigsby. That, he knew, was not a thing that would happen automatically, and when he contemplated the material with which he had to deal he was ruefully disappointed. Love had brought delight, ecstasy, but no miracle, and he had counted on the miracle. Out of love should have grown a new world in which he and his wife should dwell in simple amity and understanding even as the first man and woman of the Bible. Without that, love was vain, a little comfort in a world already too comfortable. He had entered into it honestly and frankly not caring in the least what was destroyed in him so the miracle came about. It had not come about and without ceaseless striving there would be another dull, respectable plodding household added to the thousands of them in Thrigsby. Very well then, he was ready for that effort. Did striving mean strife? So be it. Yet he trembled when he thought of Catherine, so young, so innocent and unsuspecting of the gusts of fury that assailed him.

But she was not so innocent. She was slow and sly. She liked her husband, she liked his kindness, and the unfailing consideration with which he treated her was the most comfortable sofa she had discovered, and she liked sofas. It was delicious to her to lie on her sofa and to have her handsome romantic man hovering over her. She would draw him closer and closer to her and lose herself in the overpowering comfort of his presence. All her romantic dreams of love seemed to be fulfilled. She had hardly a wish but it was gratified almost before she became aware of it. From the beginning to the

end of the day she hardly needed to raise a finger for herself, and at night she had but to accept a love which penetrated to every corner of her being and filled it with sweetness. It was the realisation of all her dreams and she was content and asked no more. Her husband quite perfectly performed his functions of ministering to that realisation and she could not imagine his having any desire outside or beyond it. Sometimes he would talk to her, as she called it, solemnly. Then she would listen but only to his voice, catching all the tenderness in it and drinking it in to add to the store of sweetness. She hoarded love as the camel hoards sustenance in his hump, and when Jamie had one of what she called "his moods" and was remote from her, then she drew on her hoard and lived on it until he came back to her. What seemed to her a return to the duty of ministration was to him a return to the assault. He would try to get her to talk of herself, but she remembered very little. She seemed always to have been petted and spoiled and her only positive impression was one of dislike for her mother.—"You understand," he would say, "that we are going back to build up our home, with children, friends."—"Mother was quite different after she married the Doctor," said Catherine. "She stopped fussing and scolding. And of course he adores her, but we didn't seem to belong to her any more. Say you adore me, Jamie."—"Yes, yes, I adore you, Kate, but there is something else beyond all that."—"I don't want anything else."—"But you have to live through it whether you want it or not."—"I leave everything to you, Jamie. You are so wonderful and I am so happy."—"I can do nothing without you, Kate."—"You have me, every inch of me."—Really, she thought, he was sometimes very tiresome. What more did he want? She was very

happy, far more happy than she had ever expected to be. It was folly to think of the future when the present was so entirely satisfying. She supposed him to be talking of the future and when she got tired of it would try to drag him back into the exquisite anguish of present delights, but always what to her was a sinking into the void was to him a leap into the keenest and most living joy. She contained her pleasure, while his joy burst from him and was free everywhere but through her. She felt dimly that he accepted her and she was faintly conscious of the danger she was in and ceased her activity and became once more, and with great relief, passive. It was pleasanter so. There were none of the emotional storms which had frightened her in him.

The crisis came one night when he broke into an agony of tears, and she lay for a long time in silence hating and despising him. At last she could endure it no longer and she comforted him blindly and stupidly as she would have done a child. His sobs tore at her heart and she wanted to stop that. She soothed him like a mother with a little foolish passionate boy:—"Don't cry, Jamie darling. I can't bear it. What are you crying for? Aren't you happy? I can't bear it if you aren't happy."—He was so glad of the comfort, so reassured to have her recognise even the boy in him that he took hope and turned to her and told her that he was a fool. Perhaps he had come too late to marriage, perhaps it would have been easier had he been as young as she—(in his heart he knew that it would not have been)—and perhaps she would understand later on.

From that moment he fixed his hopes on the time when the child should come. Then, he thought, she would be awakened. Then she would be alive to the lovely changing world in which he had his being and

there would be an end of the rigid conceptions in which she was bound. His tenderness for her redoubled and all his thoughts were centred upon her. That made her happy, convinced her that her marriage was a success and that she was provided for in complete security. She had the pleasure of feeling superior to her mother, whose marriage was one of violence—quarrels and reconciliations—and to her sister who had become more precisely the enraged spinster. Quarrels in her own life there were none. All that happened in this kind was that her husband sank into a profound gloom from which he would emerge in a desperate and furious ecstasy. Life with him was more than happy: it was exciting, though she felt a little ashamed of him for being so singular. In her rare moments of articulate dislike for him she called him **unmanly,** though she would have been hard put to it to point to any action of his in support of the epithet.

For Margaret she conceived a great liking, for Tom a full admiration tempered with jealousy when she discovered that he was the leading member of the family into which she had passed. Very easily she adopted the Lawrie shibboleths and looked down on her mother as of an inferior class: a doctor being a mere parasite on the Thrigsby which the Lawries had made, for the legend had now descended to and included them. John's success had conquered the last resistance of the Greigs and the Lawries were established in the hierarchy. Catherine had married much better than she had expected and she was rather overwhelmed at her luck. All her relations-in-law were pleased with her because she had succeeded in pinning down the one doubtful member of the family. Jamie had settled down and Cateaton's Bank would be included in their territory.

His indiscretions would be forgotten and he and his brothers could be left to represent the interests of the clan in Thrigsby, while the senior branches propagated the gospel of hard-headedness and the divine right of commerce elsewhere. Catherine took to it like a newborn swan to water. She had never been buoyed up by a philosophy before. Her own father had been an Anglican clergyman living in perpetual self-abasement, while her stepfather's whole enthusiasm was in his medical work with no other reality in the world than the human body, its mechanism, sensations, diseases, singularities, tricks, oddities, pranks and comic functions. He saw good and evil only in terms of physical health or illness, and he had denied Catherine all belief except in her beauty of which he had been almost jealously appreciative. She had had no self-reliance until she found this service in her family by marriage, who valued her beauty as an asset. They called her "the lovely Mrs. James" and made her feel her consequence. All this pleased Jamie in his simplicity. His relatives had never been so amiable to him. He was proud of his wife and glad of the happiness she had. She was not so exacting with him and they had a long period of romantic easy pleasure in each other, genial and expansive so that he hoped steadily for the love and intimacy that he craved. She was so young yet. She would learn that because she wanted a thing that was no reason why she should have it immediately without any reference to the wishes of others. But he gave her everything she wanted. When the child came, he thought, she would discover that she must yield to the necessities of another life and how they were identical with her own.

Yet when the child came there was a terrible repetition of the comedy of his marriage, and he was made a farce-

fool. Margaret and Agnes now joined with Sophia, Belle and Mrs. Broadbent. One or other of them, often more than one, was in his house continually. When he tried to protest he was told that Catherine was so young and must be looked after, and any attempt on his part to discuss her condition was treated as an indecency. He raged against them to Catherine, but she said they were very kind and she felt lonely while he was away.—"Then let them go when I come home."—"Jamie, your own mother!"—"When it comes to a great mystery like this she is as much a stranger as any other."—"How can you say such a thing? It isn't a mystery. I'm not the first woman in the world to have a baby. Besides it doesn't belong to us alone. It belongs to the family."—"Ah! You have all their arguments. I want your own. I want your own feeling."—"Oh! Jamie, do be reasonable. Do see that it is a very difficult time for me and that I want help."—"Then let me give it you."—"How can you? You're a man."—He threw up his hands in despair. The family! The family! It took everything and gave nothing. It insisted upon marriage, and denied marriage, denied its sanctity, its privacy, its intimacy. He implored Catherine to listen to him but she parried all his arguments with sentiment, his mother, her mother. At last he forced on her the logic of her sentiment and got her to consent to limit the feminine invasion to his mother and hers. Sophia, Belle and Agnes were warned off. Between Margaret and Mrs. Broadbent there were fierce battles over the pregnant body of Catherine. Mrs. Broadbent was for sound medical wisdom, Margaret for religious comfort, in what they both agreed to be an affliction. Catherine very soon wearied of them and was reduced to tears, and she vented her unhappiness on her husband. She revenged herself by treating him as

a mere man who could understand nothing of what was going on. To keep him frantic she indulged her caprices: now she must have this to eat, now that to wear: or she desired to see a particular corner of a particular field some ten miles away: or she took a dislike to a certain piece of furniture and wanted something else in its stead. She made him buy three different new beds for her confinement and would have the bedroom repapered within a month of the event. He was kept busy altering and adjusting her outward world to meet her new condition. To her inward world she never once admitted him. And over every outward change Mrs. Broadbent and Margaret quarrelled until at last Catherine, though she enjoyed it, could bear it no longer. Jamie interfered, and drove them out. They insisted that Catherine must have a woman near her until the nurse came and he said he would have Tibby or none. Tibby! What could she know about it? She was unmarried and, breathe the word, illegitimate.—"It shall be Tibby or none," said Jamie. "At least she will not quarrel and carp at everything I do. At least she will respect us as husband and wife and have a little human pity for the two of us."

So Tibby came and, with her, peace. Catherine was cowed by her and grateful for her instinctive sympathy. She was allowed at last to become absorbed in her condition and to gaze in upon herself in a musing drowsiness that presently included her husband so that she would sit for hours in silence with her hand in his, expectant, but too self-absorbed even for humility. Jamie was sensible then of his isolation with her, of the profound emptiness save for the corporeal mystery of their life together, and of the loving protection that Tibby's presence afforded them. For the other women were afraid of Tibby and suffered her to dictate their visits.

When the nurse came, Tibby remained. There was an outcry and a concerted effort was made to remove her. But she remained. John came to his brother to protest.—"Tibby's place," he said, "is with mother, to whom she is bound in gratitude."—"Mother has had twenty years' service from her," said Jamie.—"Twice twenty could not repay the debt she owes her and us."—"I don't think Tibby's life has been so grand an affair as all that, and mother really does not need more than one servant. She should move to a smaller house."—"But we are all agreed that Tibby should stay with mother."—"I am not agreed. Neither is Tibby."—"Have you been putting your heads together?"—"Not a word has either of us said."—"How does Catherine like it?"—"She clings to Tibby."—"H'm! Sophia wouldn't stand it, if I did a thing like that."—"Look here, John. Tibby is a remarkable woman. She has made a world of difference to us. She is happy here. I think she is entitled to a change. Mother's life is finished. Her house is no place for an active woman. And further, Tibby is a free agent. A kindness done twenty years ago does not make her a slave. She has repaid that kindness with a thousand kindnesses to us all. She wishes to stay here and we should respect her wishes."—"It's a damned queer business," said John, "and I wash my hands of it. I simply don't understand Catherine."—"Understanding Catherine is my business," retorted Jamie, "yours is understanding Sophia." On that John looked blank and went away to report his failure to Tom and Agnes who were much concerned with this new evidence of Jamie's oddity.—"It is perfectly clear," said Tom, "that Tibby is in love with him and always has been, and the only hope is that he is the kind of fool who would never see it. For he is

certainly a fool and we have not done with him yet."—"I don't think he is a fool," said Agnes, and Tom snorted:—"He is a fool. I say he is a fool, and he is entirely without regard for his family. And a man who does not regard his family will not regard his Queen, his country or his God. If he were not a fool he would be dangerous. He is not dangerous, therefore he is a fool."—"What sticks in my gizzard," said John, "is Tibby's extraordinary ingratitude. Mother says she will never have her in her house again. The fact of the matter is that Tibby has lost her head. The fact of his marrying has distracted her and that of course is the one reason why she ought not to be in his house. I think Catherine ought to be told."—"I don't think," said Agnes, "that I should like to be told anything about Tom that I couldn't find out for myself."—"There is nothing that you could be told," Tom rapped out and Agnes smiled to herself. She was amused by this little pother and in her heart admired Tibby for what she had done. It was so remote from what she herself could do.—"Jamie may be a fool," she said, "and Catherine certainly is, but Tibby is a wise woman. As for scandal there will never be any outside the family, for it is perfectly natural that she should go from your mother to her eldest son when he has need of someone in his house whom he can trust absolutely."

On the night of Catherine's confinement Jamie spent hours pacing up and down the dining-room, racked and torn with fear and doubt and disappointment. He was feeling acutely the humiliation of the male in his utter helplessness. He had been to fetch the doctor, who was out but would come as soon as possible. There was nothing to do but to wait. Jamie could not read. His eyes wandered about the room without resting upon

anything. His helplessness seemed to him a mockery of all pretensions. This mystery alone, and the greater mystery of which it was the centre, seemed important. All tended to the one end, but it was hidden away and ignored. Almost every idea that he had ever encountered led away from the mystery. Religion, art, habit, the traffic of every day, coaxed and seduced life away from it. Vanity erected vast fabrics from which the mystery was excluded. Even the idea of the family admitted the mystery only as an incident.—Oh! but thought was not what he wanted now. Thought also was a mockery. Presently one image only was with him. The child; he would hold the child in his arms. That would be pure contact with living flesh. That would release the mystery, give it expression and set it moving in this fog-ridden life. That would be satisfaction, beyond all pleasure, a song of praise beyond all words, with none to steal the praise and kill the song. Then it was bitter, bitter to be reduced to so small a thing, that the body of a little almost insentient child should give a truth desired in all other contact with humanity. The mere idea of it began to make his position bearable, to kindle the truth in himself and to restore his faith. Then came dread that it might be snatched from him. Every possibility ran through his mind. He might in a few moments be deprived of everything, of the baffled and yet precious love he had for his wife, of all his hopes. He broke into a sweat and was half-way up the stairs to see that all was well with Catherine when the Doctor arrived and he had to slink back, composing himself as best he could, and assuming a manly attitude. The Doctor was a little perky man with a thin, crooked, warty face. He was very pleasant and brisk. The nurse came down to greet him and he

said he would wait. Jamie offered him whisky but he refused saying that he made it a point never to take stimulants while working.—"Can't be done," he said, "if you respect your work. Ha! Ha!"—"Ha! Ha!" laughed Jamie wondering what the joke was, but the Doctor was only being cheerful.—"I often think," said the Doctor, "that a whole book might be written about a time like this. Mysterious, you know. In the dead of night, you know. An upheaval in the family, you know. I'm a bachelor myself, perhaps that's why I think about it. It's a pet idea of mine that novelists ought to consult medical men about their books. They write them too often from the point of view of the clergy. Ha! Ha! And of course they make the most woeful mistakes. Physical basis to everything, which of course knocks the bottom out of the happy ending. Ha! Ha! I mean you can't hate a villain when you know that he is only mean because he has a stone in his bladder, or that a bungler in my profession may have pressed his thumb into his brain. Little physical accidents like that you know may make all the difference between a politician and a cut-throat."—"I can imagine," said Jamie, "a cut-throat being a much more likeable fellow than a politician."—"True! True!" tittered the Doctor. "You will forgive my saying so, Mr. Lawrie, but you have the most refreshing ideas, I mean in your writing. You help one to believe that people are not such fools as they seem. You have an eye for vanity, sir. You see through it. You are interested in life as I imagined only a bachelor could be. I am surprised that you do not write a book."—"I have too much respect for the few books worth reading," said Jamie, "to add to the multitude of bad books which make them inaccessible."—"Ah!" said the Doctor. "I often feel like that about children. Why

add to the difficulty of the few lives that are worth living?"—"Good God, sir," cried Jamie, "is not every child a new hope?"—"Not," replied the Doctor, "when you look at their parents. That is how I should write my book. I should describe a man like myself entering a house, his impressions of its atmosphere. I should set down in detail the history of the parents, and the attitude of each towards the expected event. But I think I should choose the second child rather than the first, which is nearly always the father's child. By the second child the woman has discovered as a rule that she cannot live altogether in her husband, nor he in her. You see, she is thrown back upon herself. The child has more chance. If the woman is thrown entirely back upon herself there is a very good prospect of her child being a genius. Her whole vitality goes into the making of him, her whole desire for the masculine complement of her nature."—"An interesting theory," said Jamie.—"An absorbing theory," cried the Doctor. "I am examining the lives of great men for evidence of it. It explains why so many men of genius have worthless fathers, though of course a man of iron virtue is as disappointing to a woman as a drunkard or a rake. I mean that if a woman is baffled in her instinct she must either destroy or create. A weak man she need not destroy, but a strong man, a man possessed of an idea, to his destruction she will often become completely devoted. You see, the theory is pregnant. A book on it would occupy a lifetime. It attaches a new importance to birth. Why, sir, it might revolutionise the world."—"Stop, stop, stop!" said Jamie. "You are talking too fast for me. It is one o'clock in the morning and I find it hard to follow."—"Why, sir, don't you see? It gives a new importance to women, bless 'em."—"A man of genius,"

said Jamie, "is a doubtful blessing to his parents, and I think a woman cares little what a child is so he be straight."

There came a bump on the floor above them. Jamie leaped to his feet.—"I declare," said the Doctor, "I had forgotten my patient."—"Be careful of the boy's brains," said Jamie.—"And if it is a girl."—"Then be very careful of her nose."—"Ha! Ha!" said the Doctor. "There is no fear of your son being a man of genius."—"The name of Lawrie," said Jamie, "is so committed to money that it could never be that of a poet. No one can ever sing the virtues of the middle class. They can only be set down by double entry in a ledger."—"Ha! Ha!" said the Doctor. "There spake Quintus Flumen."

Tibby came in to summon the Doctor.—"Tut! Tut!" he clicked with his tongue. "Tut! Tut!" He seized his little black bag and ran upstairs. Tibby said: "The child's born, Jamie. It is a fine boy and she is well."—"Oh! Tibby, Tibby. Thank God for that. And I heard no sound. I sat here havering."—"It's a fine strong boy," said she, "and as straight as an arrow. I can't go back now, Jamie."—"No," said he. "I knew you would never go back." They had a moment of the most thrilling happiness, sharing the lovely miracle that had come to bless the house.

Soon the Doctor returned: "A boy, Mr. Lawrie," he said, "and as fine and strong and healthy a young mother as ever I saw. She'd sit for a Flemish Virgin and Child. If I may say so, sir, the very best corrective to your nerves that you could have found."—"Sir," said Jamie, "my happiness leaves no room for theory."—"Pooh!" said the Doctor. "Go and dandle the boy in your arms, express your gratitude to your wife and go to bed, for you need a sleep."

Catherine was dazed and could only smile wanly at him when at last he was admitted. But he took the boy in his arms and hugged him and cried within himself: "O! my little flame of life, O my jewel, my wonder and my hope. She has been to fetch you from the gates of death and I sat havering, spoiling the world for you already."

CHAPTER XXXVIII

MR. JOSEPH MOON AND THE SUCCESSION

MARGARET could not bring herself to forgive Tibby who had brought out into the open that which she had known for years and had cherished as one of those secrets hidden from all save God, and therefore shared only with Him. She had often prayed to God about it but now that it was known to others that Tibby loved Jamie, even though he was married, she washed her hands of it as a worldly and perishable thing to be swept with all the rest to damnation. However, being a just woman, she went to see her grandchild and requested Tibby to return. When Tibby refused she said she hoped she would not be too severely punished for her ingratitude, waited to see Jamie, told him she was going to withdraw from Thrigsby to a village on the outskirts and asked him for the copy of his father's sermons with which she proposed to console her declining years.—"You have all gone out into the world," she said, "and it is a world that has small use for me, a world that I do not understand very well. It seems to me to be moving farther away from God and I am drawing nearer to Him."—Jamie could find nothing to say. Her speech admitted of no comment.—"You are all married," she went on, "and living worthy lives and I am amply repaid for all the sacrifices I have made."—

"'Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace,'" quoted Jamie.—"No, James," she said, "I would prefer not to hear Scripture on your lips."—"Very well, mother. I should be sorry knowingly to do anything to hurt you."—"You have hurt me. I have only pride in my sons and pride is sinful."—"The world would be a harmless place if there were no worse sinners in it than you."—"Oh! well," she said, "I have done my work and now I must fold my hands. But if I am to sit at a window I must have more to see through it than Harporley Road. So I have taken this cottage at Irlam which has a window looking out over a churchyard to meadows and a wood."—"A churchyard, mother? That's cold comfort."—"I find it very comforting."

From the churchyard they passed to the question of Margaret's income to which Tom and John had at last agreed to contribute a third each.—"I'm sure I'm doing right," said Margaret.—"I have never known you do anything else," replied Jamie. "You always did have a fine sense of the fitness of things." It flashed across him that she was going to leave no room for any doubt as to the correctness of Tibby's coming to his house. He smiled at her and said: "At least, mother, if you go, you will run small risk of meeting Mrs. Broadbent."—"That woman knows," said Margaret with great dignity, "that I should never meet her again. And I do thank Heaven you did not marry that Belle. In twenty years' time she will be exactly like her mother. Catherine is a sweet girl and very religious and just the wife I could have wished for you."

So Margaret went to live by her churchyard and her three sons took it in turns to go out to see her on Sundays, and their wives would visit her during the week, Sophia and Catherine taking their children with them.

But Agnes had no children and found life difficult, yet there was no one who could understand her difficulty. Sophia's only recipe was "Be cheerful," Catherine's remedy for all ills was, "Marry Jamie." And as Agnes' real trouble was that she had married Tom neither piece of advice availed her much. Tom was kind to her but he could not conceal the grudge he bore her. He alone of his family had made a really good position for himself and he disliked the idea of leaving it for his brothers' children. His brothers had departed from the tradition. It should be closed to them for ever. For Tom the family had ceased to have any meaning. His belief was in the tradition of commercial expansion, just as John's was centred in spread of English Liberalism, and neither cared a jot for anything else. Commerce and Liberalism depended upon the fruitfulness of money and both therefore invested their money with great skill and caution, invested, sold out, reinvested, leaving no stone unturned to make every penny earn every possible fraction of interest. They would have been hurt had they been told that they were usurers, but they were usurers. They liked to think that they were pioneers of modern England, and they were pioneers of modern England. Both hated the aristocracy and both were very eager that the lower classes should be kept in order and cured of the drunkenness, lewdness, thriftlessness, extravagance, recklessness and love of pleasure which impaired the quality of their labour and exposed them to dangerous ideas and insidious doctrines. Tom was a Justice of the Peace and was notorious for the swingeing punishments he imposed on all offenders. They were different only in their ideals. Tom thought England could be made perfect by imposing severe discipline on the lower classes, while John was of the opinion that all would be

well if the aristocracy were removed. Therefore Tom remained in Thrigsby where he could have hundreds of thousands of the poor within reach, while John presently moved to the South of England to study the ways and the iniquities of the aristocracy. He had no intention of looking for their qualities.

When Tom began to study the Poor Law and expressed his aspiration to be a guardian and help in the administration of it then Agnes, without understanding a word of the Poor Law, instinctively revolted. She saw that Tom was becoming harder and more cruel and felt that he was seeking an outlet from the kindness which he forced himself to give to her. She was afraid of him and dared not implore him, as she longed to do, to pour out his cruelty upon her. She tried to provoke him to it, but he had an invincible idea that he was a good husband to her and nothing could break in upon that idea. He had her captive. The idea shut her in like an iron door. She suffered the wildest agony. Often she would lie upon her bed and writhe and weep for her barrenness. He would see that she was suffering and be coldly kind and refuse to listen to her when she tried to discuss the matter with him, because it must be too painful for her. She could have the best advice available, but she must not talk about it. His attitude was: "We know. Yes, we know. It is our tragedy. Let us forget it." She, poor wretch, wanted to realise it, not to have it eating into her very bones, not to have it crushing all her life and every pleasant thing in it. At most he would recommend her to turn to God, to his mother's God, in whom he no longer believed, for comfort. Religion was made for women, who had so many obscure sources of suffering. That religion, Agnes knew, was not made for her. She was living

in a world for which it was inadequate. She was an honest creature and needed to know her tragedy, to expose herself to it, not to bolster herself up against it. She had strength and beauty of character and she loved Tom and wished to be stronger and more beautiful for him, if only he would let her. He loved her too, but could not see her point of view, or, indeed, that she had a point of view. He was her husband, her dictator, he knew best how to make her life less hard.

At last she broke down and went to Jamie and astounded and shocked him by pouring out her tale.—"I want you to know," she said, "for I feel so useless, useless altogether, useless even to Tom, for it is shutting out everything in me that wants to help him and to be with him."—"I don't think I understand Tom very well," said Jamie. "He and I are so different and in so many ways he is a better man than I am. I used to laugh at him but what you have told me makes it very hard to laugh." Agnes was between laughing and crying. "Dear Jamie," she said, "it is almost enough to have told you. What is happening to us all, or was life always so hard?"—"I don't know," he said. "It is always hard, I think. But my mother's life must have been easy compared with yours. And those old people, Andrew and Angus and Donald, I think their lives were easier, simpler perhaps. It may be that they made mistakes for which we have to pay. But I like to think that we are trying for something greater than they ever dreamed of, some way of living that will give more satisfaction to more people. It is all very dark now and hard to see, but I like to think that. Sometimes I do believe it and then I find that I can bear any suffering."—"Why can't Tom see things like that?"—"I expect Tom is helping to do what I only dream. That would make

him blind."—"You won't tell Catherine? I don't want Catherine to know."—"No."—"I oughtn't to have said that, but I can never keep anything from Tom myself."—Jamie smiled:—"I imagine you'll keep it from him that you have told me."—"Yes."—Agnes too smiled. She felt happier. Part of her burden had passed over to Jamie and he was content to bear the weight of it.

Presently she said: "You ought to be happy, Jamie. It would be dreadful if none of us was happy, when we're all so pleased with ourselves and convinced that we are somehow great and important."—He assured her that he was happy enough and was at any rate prepared to meet anything that life might have to offer.—"We have none of us been just to you," said Agnes, "because though we all feel that you are unusual and have great qualities, there is nothing we can point to as your achievement. Perhaps we cannot believe in anything but success."—"There's the bank," replied Jamie with a grin. "I should have thought Tom would believe in the bank."—"Yes. But you are swallowed up in that. Though I wasn't thinking so much of that, but of your being important because you are what you are."—"Nothing," said Jamie, "is important in Thrigsby but money and there I am admittedly a failure. I can't keep it. Tom said once that if I had a hundred pounds in my hand and crossed the road, by the time I got to the other side I should have lost it."—"Money, money, money!" cried Agnes. "Is there nothing else? Can't people be estimable without it?"—"Not generally," he answered. "To be publicly esteemed is very expensive."—"At any rate," said she, "I know you better now and I should be sorry if you were any different. I think Catherine is a very lucky woman to have you and her baby and I hope she knows it."—On that she went upstairs to see

the baby and left Jamie to a melancholy musing, vaguely dissatisfied, oppressed with the picture of the narrowness of the life to which Agnes was condemned. It was the story of Andrew's wife over again. Success measured by money produced indifference to human failure. It looked as though marriage and love and parenthood had been abandoned as factors in happiness, dropped in favour of the security afforded by money. There was not even the heroic stoicism of his mother, such as had been adopted to protect a dear religion. Men like Tom simply shut their eyes to their failure and sentimentalised it. He was glad that Agnes had come to him. She had shaken him in his complacency and confirmed him in his recognition of the impossibility of measuring his outward life by money or his inward life by formula. That would mean to accept and condone squalor in both. At the same time he could no longer be stoical. The old religion was broken for him. It offered him no compensation that he could accept without feeling that he had denied and betrayed his liberty.—Ah! That was the word. It had begun to have a new, though as yet no very precise, meaning for him. It implied tolerance. He must allow every man, even Tom, to be himself, and certainly he felt no rancour over Tom's treatment of Agnes. That was a pitiful but inevitable tragedy. Only, if he himself were not in his own life to pile tragedy on tragedy he must gain and assert his own liberty. He had thought that the disapproval of others could deprive him of it but now that seemed to him false. Tom had everybody's approval, including his own, but he had destroyed his own liberty. He was bound hand and foot to his avarice. What then was this liberty and how could it be asserted in terms of Thrigsby, in terms of marriage with Catherine? There was no doubt in his

mind as to which was the more difficult. Thrigsby had begun to appear to him as a grim joke, a huge effort on the part of humanity's liking for the grotesque: slums for the poor, villas for the rich, a complete denial of the human need of grace, beauty, and even fresh air, a most thorough denial of all that previous generations had held desirable. So complete was the denial that it was hardly at all a menace to liberty: it had indeed given liberty a new meaning and driven himself to look for it in his own soul and not as a gift from the Almighty or a privilege wrung from princes and governors. It entailed isolation, but with it the power to break isolation down. It made it intolerable for him to live without more communication with his fellows than he had. He must be active among them for more than material profit or momentary pleasure, which meant the establishment of monotony and a drifting to stagnation. As he saw it now, Tom, the bank, the Keiths and the Greigs meant the creation of slums and poverty to procure a wealth as stagnant as poverty: a vicious circle from which liberty was excluded. They were building a dark prison in which future generations must live. There would soon be no chink nor cranny left through which the light could penetrate. And there could be no revolt. There were sentimental formulæ to provide for every dissatisfaction, and how could the poor rebel? They could keep themselves alive by working ten hours a day: they had no room for anything else but such pleasure as they could snatch, and sleep. As for liberty! Who talks of liberty in England? Are not all men free to say what they like, think what they like, do what they like, to become rich in any way they like so long as they keep within the law? A man must be very drunk before he is locked up in England. Yet this is not liberty. It is

rather expediency and a certain civic sense, a timid admission of the principle of give and take which reduces what is given and taken to the minimum. It is order rather than freedom: once again, the end lost in the means. The tyranny of the family had been broken, or was then being broken, but a new and greater tyranny had been set up. Behind the tyranny of the family was at least the authority of a great religion: behind this new tyranny, that of public order, was no authority. It had no aim but expediency, no desire but for riches, no perception of good and evil, no activity but the buying and selling of labour. Its be-all and end-all was slavery in the interests of order. Its merits were so obvious that only a fool would think of criticising it. Abuses there might be, but the system itself was beyond criticism, and it was the duty of every Englishman to adapt himself to it no matter what the sacrifice. It was the beauty of the system that it had no need of ideals. It was itself an ideal, or the working out of an ideal: the organisation of human life in a free country, a democratic country which had for ever done with aristocracy, a country for ever committed to compromise.

Then, pathetically, our champion of liberty saw the compromise of his own life, how, revolting from the callous money-making of the firm of Keith, Stevenson he had taken refuge in the bank, how, turning from religion, he had taken shelter in literature, and how, discovering a great love in Tibby, he had fled to a smaller and more pleasant love in Catherine. Shades of Byron and Shelley! What a poor thing he seemed, he, who in his youthful conceit had imagined himself to be in force another Napoleon. He roared with laughter at himself. Tragedy indeed? His life was a grim farce. Compromise at every turn and all the while his mind

would not compromise. At least he had that freedom and the courage to be a fool. He decided that he would compromise no more. Though much harm would be done yet he would not let all wither away. He had his mental life still and would preserve that whatever happened. "The man of independent mind. . . ." Poor drunken Burns! Even he in Thrigsby would have had the song choked in his throat.

It was a chastened and humble James that went to the bank on the day after Agnes' visit. Thrigsby's streets seemed wonderfully unsubstantial as though the blackened buildings could easily be blown away to remove the earth of their burden. They were so ugly and ramshackle that they could not possibly be anything but temporary, and the people had very much the air of brief sojourners: they were so obviously not really interested in what they were doing, no more interested, thought James, than himself. He certainly was not interested in the maintenance of the balance between reserve and credit, or in keeping Cateaton's superior to the Thrigsby and District. Still less was he interested in the recent rivalry which had sprung up between himself and Mr. Joseph Moon, lately transferred from his very successful branch to the head office. So far he had managed to keep Mr. Joseph Moon subordinate to himself, but now rivalry seemed absurd. Mr. Joseph Moon was one kind of man, he himself was another. Their aims were not the same. Mr. Joseph Moon was intent on self-preservation within the vicious circle of the buying and selling of labour, while Jamie's concern was with the preservation of a precious something called liberty which the vicious circle excluded. His new tolerance made him see Joseph as a decent little man bent on standing well with his fellow-Thrigsbeians and on

having his name carved on one of the foundation stones of a chapel: harmless ambitions enough which he would in all innocence employ the most mischievous means to satisfy. Why not let him? The whole of Thrigsby was nothing but a means to such an end. There were thousands of Joseph Moons and they would have their Thrigsby though a thousand Jamies said them nay. Jamie therefore relaxed in his share of the rivalry and very soon saw himself supplanted in the confidence of Mr. Rigby Blair. On the whole he was glad of that, for the worst slave to the machinery of the bank was its manager.

Mr. Rigby Blair lived for three months in the house above the bank and then one morning he was found dead in his bed. Soon Mr. Joseph Moon reigned in his stead and Jamie had to go home to his wife and tell her that he had not been appointed manager. This news was received very ill.—"Mr. Moon is quite a young man?" asked Catherine.—"Three years younger than I," replied Jamie. "He is a better financier and his father controls greater interests."—"But it was always an understood thing that you were to succeed Mr. Blair."—"By us, but apparently not by the others."—"You don't seem to mind."—"Frankly, I don't."—"But you will never be manager now. You will never have more than a certain salary. O Jamie, it will be perfectly hateful meeting Tom, now."—"What does Tom matter?"—"He despises you. You know he does. And always without a cause till now."—"Do you prefer Tom to me?"—"No, Jamie dearest, you know I don't, but I hate his having good reason to sneer at us."—"As long as we are living happily together I don't see how his sneering can affect us, though we had only a crust of bread."—"You may not feel it, though I do. And there's mother,

and Belle with her new rich husband that she's so proud of though he drinks like a fish."—"But if I tell you that I'm much happier, that I've been dreading having to take up the appointment."—"I don't believe it. I don't believe you're quite such a fool as that."—"I'm sorry if you are disappointed."—"Well, what do you expect me to be? What will your mother think of it?"—"She'll be more reasonable than you."—"She'll be resigned to it. She is resigned to everything and I hate her for it. You are like her. She's a saint, I know. So are you. But a saint in business is just a fool."—"You sha'n't suffer as far as money goes. I shall have more time for writing."—"We sha'n't have the position and I certainly didn't expect to be the wife of a common journalist."

Catherine, it will be seen, had matured and, wearying of her husband's elusiveness and unfailing gentleness, had gone to her mother for instruction in the art of marriage. From her she had learned the uses of the sharp tongue, the curtain lecture, the skilful quarrel, the curt demand, the wheedling caress, the kiss reconciliatory, the angry flood of tears, the ill-cooked meal, and the perfect joint, the sudden truth, the subtle equivocation, the locked door and the torrent of words, while at the same time preserving, what her mother lacked, the charming soft arrogance of her beauty. If, for a moment, we may regard marriage as a profession like any other, we must admit that Catherine was brilliant and shone in it. It was a profession to her, the only one open to her. It was her object to be among wives easily the first. She had been from the beginning socially indefatigable and ingratiated herself with all the Greigs as soon as she discovered that her husband had lost ground with them. Jamie, as a husband, was rather

intractable material but that only intensified her pleasure in her problem. There was no circle admittedly the best in Thrigsby but there were several groups who took that title to themselves. Into every one of these Catherine thrust her way, dragging Jamie after her, and, in spite of his shy aloofness, she had won a considerable popularity. She counted that week a failure in which they did not dine out twice, and occasionally she gave dinner-parties in her own house. Her position would have been consolidated by Jamie's appointment to the managership at Cateaton's, and she was furious at his failure, ashamed of him, exasperated by his frank confession that it was his own fault, that he had let it slip out of his hands.—"How could you let yourself be bested by that common, spotty-faced Moon? I should have thought that, even if you did not care about yourself, you would have had some thought for me and for your name. After all the Lawries do stand for something in Thrigsby."—"For what?" asked Jamie.—"Well, you and Tom aren't exactly unknown."—"But if I had got the managership we should have gone on just as we were doing."—"And why not?"—"Because we were going to wrack and ruin as fast as we could: I mean between ourselves."—"Oh! You've been thinking again."—"I have had good cause to think."—"We shall be poor, do you realise that?"—"I have told you that you shall not want money."—"But your writing only makes enemies."—"Only of men who could never possibly be my friends."—"You are not thinking of me at all."—"I am thinking of the two of us."—"So am I."—"Then we think differently."—"O! you are maddening, maddening."—"My dearest child, do, do believe in me a little."—"How can I believe in a fool who wants his wife and children to end in the workhouse?"

From that time on she took the offensive against him, plunged more vigorously than ever into social life, and struggled hard to redeem his failure. Unfortunately for both of them Mr. Joseph Moon, having tasted the sweets of triumph over his rival, wished to continue the pleasure of it indefinitely and never lost an opportunity of humiliating Jamie, taking over more and more of his work and reducing him to the position of a subordinate. Joseph was a new broom and swept very clean and indiscriminately. He made great changes in the staff, reduced salaries, and dismissed men who had been over twenty and thirty years in the service of the bank. Against that, remembering Peter Leslie, Jamie protested, and when his protest was ignored he handed in his resignation. It was accepted and he had to go home to Catherine with the news that he had left the bank.—"Left the bank!" she cried. "I might have known. I might have known that that Moon would never rest until he had got you out of it. And now, pray, what are you going to do?"—"I don't know."—"You don't know? Are we to starve then?"—"Even if we lived on our capital we shouldn't starve for three years and something is bound to happen before then. I shall be glad of a rest after all these years of routine."—She was frantic. Not at all adventurous, she needed the idea of security to be active. Without that idea she saw herself being dragged down and down into poverty worse than that which she had known during her mother's widowhood. Certainly in Thrigsby there were depths of poverty truly terrifying. It was the abyss on the edge of which all lived. Catherine persuaded herself that her husband was bent on pushing her over. She flattered herself that she understood him and she thought him very weak. He would allow the Moons and all his

enemies to thrust him down without a murmur. So she bestirred herself, swallowed her pride and went to see Tom.

He grunted when he received her news.—"But for you, Catherine," he said, "I would tell him to go and sweep a crossing. For your sake, I will do what I can." —Catherine plucked up heart.—"Unfortunately," Tom continued, and Catherine's heart sank, "unfortunately I am not in a position to do much, as I have sold my interest in my firm and am going to retire and leave Thrigsby to live near my wife's family. I am anxious about her health."—"Poor Agnes," murmured Catherine. —"I am ready," said Tom, "to swallow my objection to jobbery and I could get him squeezed into the Thrigsby and District as a cashier, or there might be a clerkship vacant in the municipal offices. My word would carry weight with the Town Clerk."—"Thank you for nothing," said Catherine with a flash of anger. "I would rather see him sweeping a crossing than *that.*"—Tom knew perfectly well what she meant. He knew as well as any Thrigsbeian the lamentable estate to which clerks were relegated: the empty no man's land between riches and poverty, but he felt that he had at last got his slippery and unaccountable brother pinned down. He had foretold this collapse. Jamie had flouted the tradition and yet had more apparent happiness than himself who had followed it to the letter, even to withdrawing from active money-making as soon as his future was securely provided for. He rejoiced in the downfall and Catherine hated him.—"I am sorry," he said, "that I am not in a position to do more, but if you are in difficulties I am quite willing to make myself responsible for Jamie's contribution to my mother's income."—"I am sure," replied Catherine, "that he will not hear of anything of

the kind. Good-afternoon."—"I am afraid," said Tom, "that there are bad times ahead. That is why I am anxious to help."

Catherine came away with a horror of the stubborn hardness of these Lawries. She had no great affection for her sister, Belle, but she could not have treated her so had she been in trouble. She knew or she thought she knew that same stubbornness in Jamie. It was that had been his undoing. They were a dreadful family, the Lawries, and she no longer counted herself lucky in her marriage. It was wrecked. She could not think of it otherwise. Jamie's courage and cheerfulness enraged her. When she told him of Tom's reception of her he laughed and said that Tom was a close old moudiwarp but would turn up trumps if it ever came to a real pinch.

Jamie was happy, had never been in such spirits; no more bank, no more routine, no more absurd rivalry with Joseph Moon. Joseph had got what he wanted, and he himself, James Lawrie, had got what he wanted, room to move in, time to think in, leisure to work in. Catherine on the other hand had lost everything she prized: money, position, and the excitement of many admiring acquaintances. She found that the truth was quickly known and she was left only with a few men who now openly demanded some return for their admiration. The women who had flattered her deserted her. To keep her footing at all she had to indulge in flirtation. That, at first, she was loath to do. She disliked familiarity in men from whom she had always exacted homage. And Jamie had been so good a lover that the slightest betrayal was repugnant to her. However, when he accepted his disaster so cheerfully, when he seemed even to rejoice in it, when he simply would

not hear of making any effort to regain the position he had lost, then she regarded herself as betrayed by him and conquered her repugnance, liked the new excitement and enjoyed her little revenges on the women who had flouted her. Jamie protected her as much as he could and was kind and still lovely to her: but she had lost in grace for him, he knew not exactly how, and he too began to be unhappy.

For a short while he wanted very much to go to London to try his luck as a journalist. He got very good introductions and was confident that through Henry Acomb he could find his way to the inner sanctuary where the great ones dwelt and revealed to the English nation the splendour of its poetry and literature. Acomb's *Hamlet* had rediscovered Shakespeare and Jamie was sure he had a fine opportunity. The theatre had become interesting once more and London needed critics. He made a plan and drew up a scheme. They would go to London, exactly as people do in books. They would live in three rooms or in a little house with only Tibby to look after them. They would find their way into a circle, such as there always was in London, like Holland House, and the Shelley circle.—Catherine would not hear of it. Thrigsby was good enough for her. People in London were a fast worthless lot who had to turn to the North of England when they wanted anything serious. And the sooner he got such wild ideas out of his head the better. Certainly she would not hear of his going alone, though, of course, if he chose to be like some worthless men she knew of, and desert her, he could. It would be a sin upon his conscience to his dying day and she would perish of misery. He had brought shame and despair enough upon her without dragging her from pillar to post among the

riff-raff of London.—(She also had read stories of artists in London, though of a different kind.)—On she went with her talk until at last he gave in and promised her that he would not go and would give up his rash ideas.—"You see," she said, by way of consoling him, "writing in Thrigsby and writing in London are two very different things and it would be a pity if you gave up the reputation you have here. For, if we were ever to sink so low as that, it might be valuable."—"I daresay," he said miserably, "I daresay we sha'n't sink so low as that."

Worse remained, for in his elation he had confided his plan to Tibby, who, seeing the keen happiness it gave him, had applauded it. Now he had to confess to her that it was shattered.—"I sha'n't go after all, Tibby," he said.—"It was a wee bit romantical," answered she. —"I suppose it was foolish and young," said he. "A man of my years ought not to be so foolish and young." —"You'll be a great man yet, James Lawrie," said she. "While you were in the bank you were but half a man." —"There's no one like you, Tibby," he said, "for putting a heart into me." And for a moment they were once more the boy and girl by the bridge in Scotland, bound together in hope and understanding. "We're fools," said she.—"We're the same sort of fool, you and I," said he, "and there seem to be few like us."

CHAPTER XXXIX

BELL, LAWRIE & CO.

THE issue out of all these afflictions was another compromise. Having failed again to do what he really wished to do and knew to be best for the particular kind of fool he happened to be, Jamie could not withstand the pressure that was brought to bear upon him. He was bullied by Margaret, by Tom, by letters from John, by Mrs. Broadbent, and, worst cut of all, by Doctor Broadbent. He had no one on his side. It was impossible to explain to them that he wished to work out his own salvation, thoroughly and, if needs must, disastrously. He did once or twice try to make them see how lamentably ill equipped mentally and morally the world was for the kind of life it was leading and how each man to live in it at all must necessarily lose his soul, since there was no work done anywhere that did not lead to the degradation of thousands of men and women. They said "Rubbish, and the world is very well as it is, prosperous and Christian, with missionaries spreading the light in the darkest corners." —"How?" they said. "And who are you to decide that this and that is wrong? While you were in a good position and earning a handsome income we put up with the unpleasant things you were in the habit of saying, for we supposed it amused you. But now that you have

disgraced yourself and actually ask us to take you seriously, you are going too far. It is your business to earn a living for your wife and children and we insist on your doing so in a respectable and ordinary manner. You don't suppose we like having to work, and who are you that you should get out of it?"—Jamie could not explain to them that what they called work was a kind of loafing which he abhorred. The actual work he had ever done in a day could have been accomplished in a couple of hours. He wanted work that called for more concentration than was ever required in any commercial activity he had known. All his objections were waved aside, and at last he promised that he would look out for some kind of regular commercial work that would cause some of the immense wealth of Thrigsby to flow into his pockets. They would not let him leave Thrigsby and if he stayed he must act in the manner of the Thrigsbeians, work hard, or, at least, long, shut himself up in his house and have as little to do with his fellows as possible. At last he consented, postponed his ambition to be another Coleridge and compromised. He took on for a time the work of a friend of his who was ill and ordered away for a sea voyage: he was in charge of the cotton market columns of Thrigsby's new Conservative daily paper.

This work he enjoyed. It gave him an opportunity to study men and manners. It meant going on 'Change and meeting great men and strange people as Turks, Greeks, Armenians, Germans, Italians and Jews. He saw a great many more people than he need have done, but he became absorbed in them and made opportunities. His romantic soul loved this patchwork of nationalities, the whole world in villainous little. Thrigsby was no longer English. It was as yet, triumphantly,

nothing, an enormous machine entirely indifferent to race, colour, thought, feeling, individuality, variety. His opinions and ideas were changed insensibly. He began to admire Thrigsby, to wish to understand it. No longer was it a dirty provincial town. It was that outwardly, but in spite of its repellent aspect and, on the whole, disgusting habits, it had a powerful and a free spirit. Its fame was world-wide. It was already something more than English. Its work depended on co-operation with men working on the other side of the Atlantic. It represented something new in the world, something that at first sight appeared ugly, hostile and destructive. It swallowed up men by the thousand, took their children and turned them almost into a different race and entombed them in dirty bricks and mortar, but it took from each a little of his essence and absorbed it into its growing mighty spirit. James Lawrie felt that and his own spirit grew big within him. He was aware of purpose but could nowhere discern it. There was nothing visible but the ugliness, the hostility and the destructive cruelty. And the men he met were also ugly, hostile, cruel and destructive. With the essence gone out of them they were like insects busily sucking the virtue out of the life of the place. It was not the corruption of vice, not Sodom and Gomorrah, but an active, splendid, ceaseless destructiveness, sucking up the rottenness of English life.—Decidedly, thought Jamie, Thrigsby was the place to be in and he had been romantic and a little foolish to dream of London and the pretentiousness of letters. Here was activity that affected the whole world, civilised and uncivilised, and it was better to be destroyed by it than elsewhere to seek to create a pleasant life. There seemed even good reason for the Thrigsbeians

setting their faces against the amenities of life; they were but a clog upon it, they had lost their meaning, they made for falseness. Life must be reshaped and it mattered not how hard and terrible and devastating the process might be. It must become formless and ungracious again if ever it were to recover form and grace. Thrigsby became to Jamie like some huge monster of which he had become affectionately terrified. He felt as St. George must have done when the serpent fawned upon him and became a meek beast and debonair. Yet there was no taming Thrigsby nor had he any wish to try. His desire was to live in its life and as near the terrible black heart of it as he could get. Merely to profit by its activity was in his eyes to impede it and to deny its virtue. It had a greater aim and significance than the reward of cunning. Never was he so full of theories: never had he had so exciting a time. He began to love Thrigsby and to yield entirely to its fascination. Whatever happened he would cling to it. In a few years, he thought (being very ignorant of history), results would appear, the new shapes forged for human consciousness: something entirely splendid and wonderful, as great as or greater even than Elizabethan England. He was so naïve as to imagine that he had but to have a clearish perception of an idea for it to become immediately effective and in accordance with his imagination. He expected the forces that controlled the destinies of generations to work in terms of his single life, and was so eager in his search for evidence in favour of this expectation that very little sufficed for him and he was rarely disappointed.

He thoroughly enjoyed his work for the paper and was sorry when his friend returned and he had to give it up. Then after a brief reaction during which the

actual heavy squalor of the town weighed heavily upon him and choked his idealism, he set about repairing his fortunes, being driven thereto by Catherine who threatened to leave him if he did not at once set about making money.

Among his new acquaintances was that Bell who had had the desk in Peter Leslie's room at which he had begun his career. Bell's career was varied and he had been a yarn agent, a commercial traveller, a manufacturer in a small way, a tout, an insurance broker: one way or another he had touched almost every side of the trade of Thrigsby, sometimes losing, sometimes making money. When Jamie met him he was prosperous, having established connections with Liverpool as a broker. He had just made a great bid to gain a really solid prosperity and had assumed liabilities which, unless all went well, were far too heavy for his resources. This he did not tell Jamie whom he marked down as a man whose money and connections would be useful to him. A popular man, he had been able to help Jamie in a number of ways, giving him introductions among the countless mysterious middlemen whose services seemed to be necessary to the production and distribution of cotton goods. Bell was a born middleman, shrewd, quick, unimaginative, without the least interest in the work he was doing except for the profits he could get out of it. He lived for the convivial society of men like himself and was never so happy as at a smoking concert of the Bowling Club of which he was a shining light. So far as he could apprehend heaven at all, his image of it was a square of bright smooth turf, with heavy wooden balls, like so many worlds rolling rather crazily across it. The fancy was Jamie's, who when he was introduced to the game by Bell, was

fascinated by it, and by the crazy passion which the men who played it put into it. Nothing else in Thrigsby had so satisfied his æsthetic sense. Perhaps it was only the lovely turf that pleased him but he read far more into it than that and he would talk by the hour to Bell, who hardly understood a word of what he was saying, but conceived a great and very humble admiration for him. Bowls in the summer evenings and on Saturday afternoons became Jamie's chief solace and delight, and when Bell proposed as an adjunct to bowls and the enthusiasm they shared, that they should join together in partnership in business, Jamie readily consented. Bell prepared a statement showing his profits and how they could be increased. The proposition was laid before Catherine, who approved it, and so the firm of Bell, Lawrie & Co. was founded and had its offices in Cut Mill.

This step won general approval. It pleased Catherine to hear Jamie speak of "his firm" and relieved her of her dread lest he should drift into some indefinite way of earning his living. It delighted Margaret to think of a house being founded with the name of Lawrie upon its doors, and Tom was of the opinion that anything was better than the employment of labour.—"You pay a man two pounds a week," he used to say, "but you have no means of knowing that you are getting two pounds' worth of work out of him."—And again he would say:—"There are no more fortunes to be made without a certain element of speculation. The trade has been so split up. There is specialisation in every branch of it."—Once he had made up his mind to retire Tom took the gloomiest view of the prospects of South Lancashire. Other countries would begin to compete. The Southern States would manufacture for themselves,

and he doubted if Thrigsby could last out another generation. He was inclined to regard the tradition as having ended in himself, and Thrigsby without the tradition could not last. Out of the fragments that were left Jamie, he thought, might pick up a few basketfuls. Sombrely he gave his blessing to the firm of Bell, Lawrie & Co., visited its offices and looked enviously upon its three clerks and a boy, and retired with Agnes to Westmorland, there to devote his leisure to the study of Adam Smith, Malthus and Ricardo, satisfied that, whatever happened, he would die a rich man, one who had accomplished his whole duty. He put a certain amount of work in Jamie's way, for the honour of the family, whose fortunes at last he believed himself to have secured. He was genuinely depressed by the loss of prestige suffered by the great houses, his own among them, and angered by the new spirit of individual success that had no desire for honour or the respect due to a great name. Thrigsby seemed to him to be full of adventures and he took his glory with him into retirement.

With this assistance from Tom and with a run of luck attending Bell's ventures the new firm prospered, and ventured still further. Catherine was very happy and excited and became an entirely devoted wife. Her second and third children were born in an atmosphere almost idyllic. The arts of flirtation she had learned in the time of her first marital crisis she practised on her husband who responded to them with a boyish ardour. Their marriage seemed perfect and Tibby returned, without protest, to Margaret. She made no excuse except that Margaret was failing and needed more than the raw girls who entered and left her service in the intervals of factory work. Catherine was charming to her and said: "You know there will always be room for you

here, Tibby."—"I know that," said Tibby, "but I go where I am needed."—"And if you should ever think of doing some other work, or starting a little shop, my husband will be only too glad to help you," added Catherine, thoroughly enjoying this gracious expression of her relief at Tibby's departure.—"I've no thought of such a thing," answered Tibby, "and if you should ever be in a poorer way than you are now, I would come back, without wages, if need be."—"I know you would," said Catherine, "but Mr. Lawrie has found the work he likes and is confident of making his fortune."

Tibby waited to see Jamie.—"You'll have need of me yet," she said. "It's not in you to be happy for long."—"That's true," said he, "but I don't think my happiness is of much importance. I've put my shoulder to the wheel and I'll shove as hard as I can."—"You'll never be the same as Tom and John, however hard you try."—"No. I believe in Thrigsby and they don't."—Tibby gave a peculiar inarticulate grunt and a click of her tongue.—"Have it your own way," she said, "but you'll have need of me yet."—"What are you reproaching me for, Tibby?"—"I'm no' reproaching you, Jamie. I'm just going and I don't like going. It seems like a slipping backwards."—"It's your own wish."—"Aye. But the tale's not done."—"I never supposed it was."—"But you're content."—"For the present. Why should I not be?"—"Oh, well, I'm a foolish woman, thinking better of you than you deserve."—"You've always done that."—"Humility, James Lawrie," said she, "is not becoming to ye."

So she went back to Margaret and with her went the peace of Jamie's domestic life. Catherine resumed her old arrogance and was no longer a companion. Tibby's presence had awed her into subtlety and meekness, but

when she found herself once more mistress without effort of her own house she assumed her power and exercised it for the pleasure of doing so. She felt that she had been tricked into submission, duped into happiness, and she strove to abuse her husband. With her jealous mind she went probing into his relationship with Tibby and could make nothing of it. All she knew was that he and Tibby would sometimes talk together for hours, while with herself he could never keep up a conversation, unless it were tender, for more than twenty minutes. She hated Tibby but could never defy or resist her authority. Even with the children Tibby was right and herself was wrong. Without Tibby she was rather helpless with the children and had no instinctive knowledge of their needs. They fretted her nerves and exhausted her and she was ashamed of the resulting confusion. Without Tibby there were constant mistakes in the household arrangements: there was a constant loss in precision and cleanliness. Tradespeople cheated her and she was continually removing her custom from one shop to another. Nothing went right and she visited her exasperation upon Jamie, who was tumbled out of the paradise in which he had been living. The armistice came to an end and the war was resumed, the pathetic, futile and hopeless war of the sexes.

Catherine sought to make him jealous and for her constant companion chose a certain Mrs. Halloran, a woman with whom whispered scandal was constantly busy. Jamie hated scandal and refused to listen to it. Mrs. Halloran was an amusing clever Irishwoman, honest after her fashion, but driven by the heavy respectability in which she lived into strange courses. She adored Catherine's beauty and found it useful as a protection from the unwelcome attentions which her notoriety drew

upon herself. Men, with their boundless conceit, amused her. She knew perfectly well how to defend herself and it was a new excitement to her to defend Catherine. Very soon Mrs. Halloran and Mrs. James Lawrie were inseparable and the most malicious gossip was aimed at them. They entered the social life which had a certain very High Church for its centre and there they created a disturbance. The young men were at Catherine's feet, the married men at Mrs. Halloran's, and of the doings at her house the wildest reports were circulated. Jamie received anonymous letters but he burned them. Once or twice he protested that he was lonely in the evenings and Catherine said: "I am lonely all day long," and she would observe that as she did not object to any of his friends he had no right to object to hers. She was careful never to be out late and none of her obvious duties were neglected.

At last there came a dreadful period of silence between them. For three weeks hardly a word was spoken, certainly no word that was not absolutely necessary. It was torture to Jamie to come home to it, yet he could not break the silence. She was expecting him to protest. If he protested she would defy him. At last when he could bear it no longer he took the blame upon himself and he apologised and tried to examine with her the causes of their estrangement. She said that men never understood women and expected them to put up with a dull life with no excitement except a new dress now and then or a visit to the Panorama, that he never considered her worth talking to and therefore could not blame her for going among those who thought better of her. The root causes of their difficulties she would not approach but she gradually forced him to patch up a truce in which their relationship was for the first time false. There

was a dangerous excitement in it which angered him and filled him with dread. He felt degraded and his world became a mockery to him. What was the good of success in Cut Mill if day by day he had to go home to that appalling failure? He envied Bell who had a jolly common little wife who was content to be kept in a cheap little house that was rather like a stable, in which Bell ate, slept, and fulfilled his natural necessities. It was hardly more to Bell than the boots on his feet or the clothes on his back. A man had to have a home and he spent as little thought and money on it as possible. Oddly enough the arrangement also suited Mrs. Bell. She was fond of her husband, but if she had his company for more than half-a-day she quarrelled with him, and she was very amiable and disliked quarrels. Their relationship was simple but entirely hard and practical and therefore, to Jamie, odious and a profanation. Bell in his home was intolerable, completely empty and vulgar, without even the geniality which elsewhere and in other transactions made him so likeable. It became almost an obsession with Jamie that his own marriage might descend to that level, and it seemed better to him to allow Catherine her freedom. Better those risks than the suppression which had made of Mrs. Bell the faded, foolish little creature that she was. It came as no surprise to him when he discovered that his partner kept a second establishment. That seemed a necessary corollary of marriage *à la* Thrigsby. The town was reeking with a sordid joyless viciousness, like a phosphorescence over a swamp. He could sympathise with Catherine. He would continue to allow her her freedom and would do his best to protect her. He devoted more time to her and went with her among her friends. The result was comically disastrous for Mrs. Halloran

pounced on him and quickly had him entangled in a foolish flirtation. He was no match for her, lost his head, and relapsed into the fatuous condition to which he had been reduced aforetime by Selina Leslie. Catherine triumphed over him and scorned him and Mrs. Halloran despising so easy a prey flicked him away and left him raw with chagrin.

Jamie's domestic affairs were in a parlous state when worse befell. Bell cleared out with the cash-box and every realisable security, leaving only an impudent note expressing his regret for his action which he explained to be necessary before the storm broke. Jamie imagined the storm to be domestic, but it was not long before he discovered where it lay. The Southern States of America declared their intention of seceding from the Union and breaking away from the tyranny of the North. War was declared and within a very few days Jamie was faced with the fact that his business had been swept away from him. At best, he saw when he examined the books, it had been a gamble of Bell's, and once again he had made a complete fool of himself.

At first he could think of nothing but Bell's treachery. That alone seemed black enough to account for the war. If there was such evil as that in the world then there must be wars, plagues, pestilences, famines. Then with the war was associated Tom's retirement. Tom must have known that it was coming: nothing else could have made him renounce his ambition to have his statue alongside Andrew Keith's in the Town Hall Square.

For a week or two Jamie was dazed and hid his condition even from himself. He went down to his office as though nothing had happened and kept his clerks working at letters concerning imaginary transactions. He could not realise the war as something actually hap-

pening among human beings: it was taking place for him on the map of America, a conflict between political principles, and conveyed no idea of bloodshed, or wounds or men lying dead on the plains. And so many of the men he met were in the same condition, dazed, stupefied, not seeing how they were concerned, not realising the ruin that had come upon them. Little by little excitement grew. What was the Government doing? There were hotheads who cried for war upon the Northern States, elderly gentlemen consumed with bloodthirstiness who declared that the time had come for the British nation to recover her colonies and to crush the damned Yankees, if necessary to exterminate them, burn them out like wasps. There were even men who came into Jamie's office, very white-faced and grim, to say goodbye as they were off to have a shot either at the Yankees or at the slave-drivers. And there went up from Thrigsby a droning mighty note of thangsgiving that the English were not as these and had no blood upon their hands. But when the Southern ports were blockaded and it became clear that no cotton was forthcoming, then the cry was for war. England must declare for the Southern States and liberty. England alone could free the negroes. England was the sole champion of the liberty of mankind and it was almost an impertinence of the Northern States to pretend to be acting in the name of liberty.

The clamour died down as a paralysis crept over Thrigsby and the mills were closed down one after another. The attitude of the Government to the suffering States was forgotton. It became a matter of *sauve qui peut.*

Jamie implored Catherine to listen to him, to help him to restore their marriage, their life together to a basis

of understanding and sympathy and she was frightened into acquiescence. He told her that nothing else mattered, and to him then nothing else did matter except human comradeship: riches, poverty, intellect, art, amusement, fun, kindliness, virtue, vice, good and evil, all were to him vain without the central core of living sympathy. That way lay liberty and towards that all efforts should be directed with nothing spared for any other until a little of it had been won and established. He became like a man possessed and battered at the unfortunate Catherine with entreaties arguments, tears, sobs. His was the cry of a soul in agony and it frightened her. He told her that love was a sweet thing and a dear pretty thing but in itself worthless unless it led to that living sympathy without which joy itself was a burden and a cruel hardship. And if love by itself was worthless, what were pleasure and wealth and position, all that she desired, all that she had lost in his ruin? But she was too frightened to understand him: she was frightened of poverty, of being dragged down with her children. At last he understood her and saw that he must do what he could to comfort her. His ruin was not utter. There need be no anxiety yet: not for many months. He convinced her that he too had her welfare at heart, but her relief was as overpowering as her fright had been. That he loved her, that all the pleasantness of life was not gone, was all she needed to know. His passionate longing to break the sexual arrogance in her was frustrated. She would not, could not look beyond love or regard love as anything but an end in itself. Love was her comfort against the fright she had had and she insisted on his being wholly, violently, crazily her lover. In the hope of more he acquiesced and seemed

to win more and during this period of concentration on his marriage was absolutely indifferent to the ruin and famine that were creeping over Thrigsby and the kindred towns.

CHAPTER XL

DISASTER

FANNY SHAW had not been forgotten. She and Tibby had remained great friends so that Fanny was often at the house where she would linger in the hope of seeing her adored Jamie. She had accepted the melancholy fact that his marriage must thrust her into the background, and she was content to be a kind of pensioner of the family. Catherine would give her parcels of old clothes and every Christmas Jamie would send her home with a turkey and a plum-pudding for her mother. At first she made herself ill with hatred of Catherine, but Tibby soon talked and coaxed her out of that and assumed responsibility for the girl who remained attached to the theatre, sometimes acting, sometimes helping with the wardrobe, doing everything she was told to do cheerfully, being paid irregularly and living for the most part on gifts from the kind-hearted women of the theatre. Jamie's marriage was really a tragedy to her. It ate into her spirit and arrested her development. She was left turned in upon herself, brooding and moody. Tibby coaxed her gradually to talk of Jamie and found that she had an extraordinary understanding of him and showed him often in lights new to herself. That eased Fanny's pain and relaxed the strain in her. She would take refuge with Tibby from the theatre and from the mean

streets which she had begun to hold in horror. She clung to the theatre because she did not know what else to do, and imagined that she was pleasing Jamie by staying. He did not forget her but was glad that Tibby should be his substitute. However when Tibby returned to Margaret and Fanny no longer came to his house he did forget her except that he paid for her to have lessons in singing and dancing.

She came to him one evening soon after his desperate scene with Catherine. She came from the outer world which just then seemed entirely remote as though he had had nothing to do with it.—"Why, Fanny," he said, "I had almost forgotten you."—"Yes," she answered.—"I'm glad to see you," he said. "What a tall young woman you have grown into."—"Yes," she replied. "They say I'm almost too tall for the stage and much too thin. Though I don't think it matters much, as the theatre will be closed very soon. Father's warehouse is closed and mother has very little charing and I want to know what I'm to do about it."—Jamie stared at her, hardly taking in what she had said. She went on:—"They've got about two pounds in the house and I don't know what they'll do unless I go on the streets."—Jamie began to understand, to feel vaguely, the fury that she was in.—"It's the same everywhere," she said, "everything is dearer and there's no money. What are you going to do about it? They don't seem to mind, but I can't bear it, I can't bear it."—She began to beat her fists up and down in the air, and he took her roughly in his arms and held her tight until she began to weep on his shoulder. Then he let her cry out her grief. When she was calm again he promised that he would go with her. They went down to the kitchen and made up a parcel of food and with this under his arm they set

out and walked through the strangely silent streets, under the deserted mills, and the empty warehouses down to the black stews where the Shaws lived. There Jamie was appalled. The house was almost destitute of furniture. There remained one bed and in this Mr. Shaw was sleeping. It was his habit to go to sleep when trouble came. He had been known to sleep, when out of work, for three months on end, getting up once a week to eat a slice of bread and an onion. He was philosophical about it, saying that in this way he was no drag upon his wife and children. For half-a-second he woke up when Jamie came, asked if he had brought work, and went to sleep again when he received an answer in the negative. Mrs. Shaw as usual was loquacious. She had always been an honest woman, she had, and with lodgers had made both ends meet; but now there were no lodgers and no work and, though God knows there were sinful people in the world, she was not one of them and could see no reason why she should be so punished. There was Mrs. Kerry at 35 who took men as well as the washing, but the world was not composed of Mrs. Kerrys, but perhaps it was a judgment on her for letting her eldest girl go out above her station and give herself airs. Jamie let her talk and fed the children, who, poor mites, could hardly eat, they were so hungry. One of them said his belly was growling.—"Vile, vile, vile!" said Jamie as he left. No thought had been given to these poor wretches. He himself had given no thought to them, and there were thousands of houses like that, thousands of families in such straits. He cried within himself: "While there is a child hungry in the land, not one of us has the right to hold up his head. Freedom! Is this your freedom, England? And you dare to reproach the Americans while there is hunger in your land!"—He wrote to both

his brothers, to Donald Greig, to Hubert. Hubert sent him a cheque. The others replied that no doubt relief would be undertaken by the proper authorities, and that the collapse was only temporary. Work would be resumed as soon as arrangements had been made for the importation of cotton from Egypt and India.—"On the old terms?" asked Jamie. "On the terms that you make as much as possible and give them as little as possible? Have you no hearts? Will you not see that you are responsible both for the slavery in America and the destitution at home? You will have Thrigsby go back to the old order of things, and on this ruin build more squalor, more filth, more degradation?"—All this made Tom very angry and he replied from his comfortable house in Westmorland: "If you had studied economics instead of poetry you would have a better understanding of what has happened, and would not be hysterical. The good sense of the country will not allow the mill-hands and warehousemen to starve."—Jamie answered in three words: "They are starving."

He tried in vain to procure some immediate organisation. There was individual charity in plenty but an appalling waste of food through it. The churches and chapels did all they could but they were jealous of each other. It was soon clear that Thrigsby could not tackle its own problem. Jamie was in such a fury that he could find no one to co-operate with him. He condemned charity. Gifts, he said, were not wanted, but a change of system, and as all the charitable people were enjoying their charity he was very unpopular. He wrote violent exhortations to effort, but when he wrote what he really felt he could not get his writings printed. The papers had taken the line that everything possible was being done.—"Has any rich man," asked Jamie, "given even

a tenth of his income, or given up consuming in one day food that would keep a working-class family for a week?"—That kind of thing the papers would not print, and one editor, his friend, took him aside and said: "Look here, my dear Lawrie, you are doing yourself no good. What you are after would mean a change in human nature."—"I don't want a change," said Jamie, "I want human nature to be given a chance. Change your rotten ideas. Talk sense. What else are the newspapers for? Give up telling them what you think they think you ought to think. Let decent people tell them what they feel. Nothing else is any good. Tell them that things in themselves are of no value, that all the value is given to things by labour, that the only object of labour is that we should give each other liberty."—The editor shied at the word. He patted Jamie on the shoulder: "I know all that, my dear old fellow, but you won't get the Mayor, Aldermen and Council to see it. Nobody wants liberty. What everybody wants is comfort. You're a bit of a genius and a thinker and all that, but the main object of the average man is to avoid thinking. They'll stump up to get the dirty old town out of this mess but they won't think about it. Now you run along home and write me an article about old Donald trying to think and giving it up because it makes his mind ache and I'll print it with pleasure."—Jamie began to chuckle. His friend had checked his frenzy, but he was not to be free of it for many months to come. It would break in upon him and set him reeling at the oddest and most unexpected moments. To what end was all this hideous raw suffering?

One night he went to the Shaws. Fanny admitted him. She looked strange and he soon saw that she was light-headed. The house was in darkness and filled with

a strange sweetish smell. She told him in a cold matter-of-fact voice that her father had risen from his bed, gone out and come home drunk. Then he had cut his wife's throat, smothered the two children who slept on the mattress in his room, and gone out and flung himself into the canal.—"They're in there," she said. "All dead. All dead. It's so easy to be dead. He was quite right. It's better to be dead. He must have been thinking about it when we thought he was asleep. He was always a quiet one, was dad. But I don't want to die, because I love you. Poor people don't love anybody, but I love you."—She crept to him and knelt by him and fondled his knee.—"It's wicked to love you. I'm the only wicked one of them all and I'm alive."—She kissed his hand and her body writhed. He put his hand over her mouth to stop her talking, and she tried to drag it down to her throat, and to press his fingers into her flesh. He shivered and was bitter cold. His throat was dry and he could speak no word. His eyes burned but no tears would come into them.—"Hush, dear, hush," he said. "You mustn't stay here. You must come away."—He half carried, half dragged her out of the house. On the threshold they met one of the neighbours and a policeman; he told them what had happened, gave his name and address and said that he was taking Fanny to be cared for.—"Quite right," said the neighbour. "Poor girl, poor girl."

Fanny was half unconscious now. The fresh air had been too much for her. Jamie carried her to a mews he knew of round the corner, procured a fly and drove out to his mother's house. He had no thought of going to his own. His need was for Tibby.

They put Fanny to bed and Tibby wrapped her up in a blanket to make her warm, for she was as cold as ice

and shaking horribly and convulsively. When Tibby returned to the kitchen she found Jamie sitting with his head in his hands sobbing.—"You mustn't break down too, Jamie," she said. "You mustn't break down now when there's so much to do."—"What can I do? What can I do? Except undo the whole of my life?"—"You can't take the sins of the whole world on your shoulders," said she.—"But we are all to blame, every one of us, for we take and take and take and give nothing until we are all separate and the whole world comes down about our ears, and because we are separate there is nothing to be done, only to feed hungry bellies. Fanny's mother worked for a whole day for an apronful of stale crusts. We are all separate and all starving. They'll feed them with charity and then go on just the same as before. The suffering of others is no suffering to them. Do you think Tom will feel all this, or John? Not they!"—He raised his voice to a shout and Margaret who had just come in from a consultation with her vicar hurried down to see what the disturbance was about. Jamie told his story and how and why he had brought Fanny to the house.—"She would have been better in hospital."—"She would not," cried Jamie. "She is devoted to Tibby and the presence of her friends will be far more to her than any physician's skill could be."—"It is too ghastly," said Margaret, "and I shall not sleep at night for thinking of it."—"That's fine!" said he. "Because you have rich sons you are to be protected from all the suffering in the world."—Margaret was silent for a moment. He went on:—"And your sleep is of more importance than the life and death of thousands. That's your ambition: to be secure and indifferent."—"You don't know what you are saying," she said. "I haven't seen you like this since you were a boy."—"No," he muttered.

"You've shut your eyes and your heart to me."—Margaret turned and almost ran from the room.—"That's the worst you've ever done," said Tibby.—"It's true! It's true!" said he, almost angrily.—"Words spoken in anger," said Tibby gently, "are never true."

The anger in him melted and he went up to his mother, whom he found grim and turned to stone, sitting gazing out of the window. He spoke to her very gently and she said: "If I have done wrong I have been punished. My sin was pride and I have been punished in the misery of my children. There is not in any of you the simple joy that was in your father. Is it all my fault?"—"We are all at fault," said Jamie. "We have destroyed and made nothing new. We have denied the love which is God and have dwelt in the love which is of the earth. It has destroyed us."—Mother and son made moan together and bitter lamentation. Both were simple and primitive. The storm passed through them and purged them and Jamie was left with a clear desire for action. He had no thought for his own affairs. They could wait. Only the plight of Thrigsby mattered.

The next day he took train for Westmorland and descended upon the Greigs and made them hold a council. It was easy to frighten them. He drew terrible pictures of the destruction that might take place in Thrigsby if the starvation was not relieved. He described and enlarged on the riot which had taken place outside Clibran Hall when old Andrew Keith had played the tyrant. Those days, he said, were over. There was no longer room for tyranny. There was no longer any other necessity than that the people should be fed. No prestige could hold out against that. Donald was thoroughly frightened when he thought that his mills and warehouses might be burned and that the streets of shops

from which he drew his rents might be sacked. Jamie bullied him into starting a subscription list with two thousand pounds. He made Tom fork out five hundred, and felt like a dentist drawing a tooth. Agnes promised to give him, secretly, two-thirds of her income every quarter. With this for a beginning he went among the merchants of Thrigsby and shamed them into subscribing. But still there was not enough.

He went out to see Hubert and got him to organise his whole country-side to send in corn and vegetables free. But still there was not enough.

When it seemed that Thrigsby could do no more then he went to London where funds had been opened. London was not yet awake to the necessity. The North of England was remote from the Londoners who hardly conceived of the Lancashire mill-hands being men and women like themselves. Jamie went to see Acomb and Selina and laid his case before them. They must give a performance in aid of the suffering people of the North and raise a subscription from the audience. Acomb readily consented and put on *Hamlet*. Before the third act he came forward and made a speech that was a dramatic performance in itself. He described Thrigsby quite wonderfully, beginning with his own first entry into the place, how he had lodged in a certain gloomy street where the children were like little old men. He described his own early struggles. He showed how thousands and thousands of men suffered these abominable conditions to add to the wealth of the nation. Were they not also a part of the nation and in their hour of need was that wealth to be withheld from them?—"Good, good!" muttered Jamie, looking on, and seeing the actor's words sink home into the audience of fashionable people, dandies and intellectuals. He met several

of them afterwards in Acomb's dressing-room and in his raw condition was acutely sensitive to their insincerity which chafed him. They had a new sensation and were excited about it. Not one of them seemed to be moved, not one of them was shaken in his complacency. Yet they were interested and that was the great thing. Some of them were men of powerful influence and they promised to do what they could. Jamie was a new type to them, a wild man from the North. They eyed him much as a few years before they had eyed General Tom Thumb. They patronised him and pitied him. He was so obviously suffering under his sincerity, an affliction by which they were determined at all costs not to be visited. They stripped him of the last vestiges of his illusions about the wonders of London literary life and he was glad to depart for the North again.

The performance was far-reaching in its consequences. The uses of advertisement were yet undiscovered in those days, and any advertisement had tremendous results. Money in plenty was soon forthcoming and the difficulties of Thrigsby were met until supplies of cotton were available and the mills could be got going again.

Not a word of thanks did Jamie receive. He had made himself a nuisance and he had given vent to violent and dangerous opinions. Henceforth and for ever he was a stranger to respectability. He crept back into his own home and even there found little welcome. Catherine's friends had been careful to inform her of the effect of his utterances and not of his doings. When she found that out of the three thousand pounds he had left in the world he had given one thousand to the Mayor of Thrigsby's fund she was furious. How could it help the starving poor if they also starved? He said he would work. What work?—"There will be work,"

he said, "when the war is over."—"And till then?"—"Till then there is no need for anxiety."—"But I am anxious."—"Without reason. You can have the control of what we have left, if you like."

She turned to Mrs. Halloran and plunged into the new gaiety with which a certain section of Thrigsbeian society had endeavoured to lighten the dark hours. Jamie shut himself up with his old refuge *The Faerie Queene* and for many weeks saw no one but his mother, Tibby and Fanny, in the one house where he could feel any stirring of the love of his vision. For he had become visionary. The world of material things had dwindled. He took so little interest in it that it was hardly even comic. He had a terrible period when he thought of human beings as mere animals controlled entirely by their physical functions, having no connection with each other save in the satisfaction of their lusts so that their minds bred nothing but lies, in the accumulation of which they were suffocated and brought to ruin: and even when in appearance they had risen above this brutish condition they were frozen by their hypocrisy. It seemed to him true what his friend the editor had said, that their main object in life, once they were fed, was to avoid thinking. He was thoroughly exhausted and reduced almost to apathy, through which there thrilled slowly a tremulous happiness that brought with it a strange child-like courage to bear injustice, evil, and even spiritual failure with a stiffened lip and head erect. His vision found the support of a rough hard-headed common-sense, a belief that the confused appearance of things was somehow an expression of a clear reality, much as to his mother the world was an expression of the God whom she so worshipped in her quiet devotion. But life as he had known it was so much greater than

that God, who had become only a limitation of life and a drag upon it, so that an emotion fashioned in his image was immediately abstracted from life and ceased to be effective in it. It was absurd now that so many natural forces had been released and the impact of men in the mass upon the individual had become so powerful as to force the individual to react or perish—it was absurd to suppose that God had accomplished his creation once and for all. With the resources of modern life such a creation had become the prey of men.—"The world's mine oyster."—Creation was not accomplished. It was continuous and unceasing and in it every living thing had its share, destroying and creating.

Jamie lost himself in a maze of metaphysical ideas, striving to justify the ways of God to man and also to enlarge his idea of God. As, however, he had a brain that could not think for twenty minutes without taking fire, he soon sought relief either in reading or in writing, constructed nothing, and was left without any other guide than his own honest humanity. That saved him from the contempt into which in his more despairing moments he was in danger of falling. Both his temper and his humour were mellowed and he was left without rancour. Thrigsby was itself again, more itself than ever, for the lot of the poor was in no way alleviated and a period of prosperity had set in to produce an unprecedented expansion of trade. The famine had been to the manufacturers, merchants, and shippers no more than a bad year to a farmer. They had weathered it somehow and must make up for it. Of deeper effects there was no sign, though there was an increase of agitation among the working people. Jamie had hoped for a collapse but there was none. If anything there was more frankness in the avarice of the business men and

less cant about the future of England and Thrigsby. There was even less civic sense. Local politics were of less importance and it was hardly a distinction to be a member of the Town Council. The Mayor and Aldermen were, if they were noticed at all, objects of ridicule. Still, the gain in frankness was something. Decent people could have a quiet life and keep themselves to themselves. That was all Jamie desired. He had been hurt and bruised and felt too crippled to enter the scramble again. He had painful hours with Catherine trying to reconcile her to the idea of being poor. It was difficult but he was so kind to her that she could not take exception and she could find no argument in favour of riches that he was not able to demolish with a word or two. His attitude towards her now was that she was the wife of his bosom, the woman with whom through fair weather and foul he would go hand in hand. They had had their pleasure and their torment, there was now no room for sentiment. She was the fellow-creature with whom it was his fate to live and quarrel and kiss and bring up children. She would always be a romantic figure to him and for the rest there would be one long struggle to keep life decent until the end. He had no room in his life for folly and hoped that in time there would be no room for it in hers either. In the meantime it was not for him to dictate to her what she should or should not do. He gave her full freedom and so impressed her that for a time she sobered down. They were brought together also by a great grief. In the middle of their greatest perplexity they received the news that Sophia, to whom they were both fondly attached, had died suddenly. She had been delicate ever since her return from Australia, and her life with John had been a pilgrimage from place to place in search of a climate

that would suit her. Bournemouth had seemed to encourage her vitality, but she died there and John was left with his two boys.

Margaret wished to go to him but it was generally agreed that she was too old. Tibby offered herself but the affair was settled by John's having a violent and bitter quarrel with the Greigs over Sophia's estate in the course of which he made himself so detestable and feeling ran so high that there was a breach between the two families. Tom gave up his house and withdrew to Cheadley Edge and Mrs. Donald bundled Maggie out of her house. Poor Maggie had given up all thought of fending for herself and returned, bewildered and abashed, ashamed and conscious, for the first time for years, of her wig, to her mother's house. There she shut herself up in her room and would see no one but Fanny, for whom she conceived a great affection. John for the time being took up his residence with Tom, the boys being turned into Jamie's nursery.

So the family was united once more and Jamie with a quizzical eye was able to measure its achievement, solid, respectable, unadventurous: three quiet households, established at the cost of what suffering and poverty to others! He and his brothers were three as upright, honest men as you could find in England and two of them were perfectly satisfied that no more could be asked of them. Successful in their private lives they intended henceforth to devote themselves to the public service, that is to say, they proposed to do all in their power to destroy the influence of the aristocracy and to enlarge the sphere of men like themselves in order to increase the wealth of the nation and to consolidate it by thrift. So quiet, so peaceful, so ordered would the life of the country become that all other nations would emulate it and

there would be no more evil in the world, no part of it would be closed to trade and its blessings and black, brown, yellow, red and white men would be united in honest botherhood, and they would all speak English.

It was a joy to Jamie to listen to his brothers talking, to watch them oozing with a quiet satisfaction and to think of his own capital trickling away while he did nothing. They had no idea of the state of his affairs. They were secret with each other and though they knew Jamie to be poor, they never imagined his poverty to be such as to disgrace them. They regarded him as a little mad. He had lost his head during the crisis, but they supposed him to be shrewd enough to have made some provision for himself. It was often on the tip of Jamie's tongue to tell them, but he decided to put it off until he was compelled by poverty to do so, trusting that it would never happen. When it became necessary he would make an effort. Until it became necessary he could not. He was so happy in his freedom, or at least in his discovery of the way to it through what he called living sympathy. It was his passionate and absorbing pursuit to be with all sorts and conditions of men. He would go first of all to Tibby, with whom his sympathy would be roused to a high pitch of activity, and then he would welcome any company that came his way, taking a passionate and impersonal interest in all that was said and done. It seemed absurd and pathetic to him then that people's lives should be so personal and egoistic. They were so stiff and cramped that even in what was purely personal they could express no force or keen vitality. About Tom and John for instance there was a queer perfection which made them seem almost automatic, very like animals except that they had none of the sleek contentment of animals and no high spirits. They had no interest out-

side the reduction of life to the terms of commerce and they believed themselves to have succeeded.

The air of the melancholy widower suited John admirably. He was hushed and subdued. He took a little house at Cheadley Edge to be near Tom. Maggie went to be his housekeeper and took Fanny with her. Sophia was canonised. The little house was a shrine to her memory and Maggie's piety found full vent in being priestess in it. For a time the little house became the central point of the family's existence. Its members were grouped round the memory of Sophia as the Greigs had been grouped round the memory of old Angus. A visit to John's house was a pilgrimage.

Jamie was depressed by it all without at first knowing why. He recognised the assertion of the family principle but could not acquiesce in it, for it was an offence both to his vision and to his common-sense. It was empty and meaningless, terrible indeed, for it meant that the family could only hold together by living in the dead.

At last one Sunday when they were all gathered at John's house he could endure it no more and blurted out the lamentable state of his affairs, that he had been living on his capital and in another few months would be reduced to penury and unable to contribue to his mother's income.—" 'Pon my honour," said Tom, "this is the last straw! And what pray have you been doing all these months?"—"Nothing," replied Jamie.—"Come, come, this is no time for fooling. You are not a boy. You must have realised how criminal it is to touch your capital."—"I didn't see what else I could do."—"You could have worked."—"That is just the point. I couldn't. I wanted to think things out."—"Rubbish. You have a wife and children."—"I supposed that, if the worst came to the worst, the family would look after them."

—"Shameless!" cried Tom.—"I think it will be shameful if the family doesn't look after them."—"And you propose to sit still and fill your great hulking body with the bread of charity?"—"I don't see what else I can do. I'm finished. I don't know why, but I'm finished. I couldn't even do a clerk's work well enough to be kept on after a month's trial. You see, I don't believe in any single branch of the whole business. I think we're all finished. We've done harm enough in all conscience and the only reparation we can make is to do nothing."—"Disgusting nonsense!" cried Tom, "and I for one shall not raise a finger to help you. A man who can think and say such things deserves to die in a ditch and to be buried as a pauper. I think John agrees with me." He glared at John.—"I agree," said John, "in theory."—"I have no use for theory that is not in accordance with practice."—"Then you ought to approve of me." said Jamie, "for I hold exactly the same view."—Tom rapped on the table:—"But would you hold the same views if you did not know that your brothers were rich men?"—"If we were a poor family," replied Jamie, "I should go to bed and let Catherine go out charing, but then, if we were poor, we should not be plagued with all this nonsense about the family. We should know that the family could do no more for us than the nation and that there was absolutely nothing to support us in time of trouble. I have done my best for the family and I have failed because I never realised that the family's idea of a good life and mine were hopelessly at variance. I have to put up with the consequences of my folly and the family repudiates its responsibilities. Very well then. We need not quarrel. I will go my own way. Come, Catherine."—"Stop!" said Tom, and "Stop," cried John.—Margaret, who had been reduced to tears, slipped from the

room.—"If Sophia were here," said John, looking down his nose, "she would put us all right. We had many painful scenes somewhat resembling this with her family. Sophia, who was an angel, could always find a solution." —"In this instance," said Jamie, "the only possible solution is mine. If you cannot stomach the idea of our living from hand to mouth then leave us alone. You can have the pleasure of abusing me as much as you like. Either you share the goods of the family with those who are unable to contribute to them or you must acknowledge that the family is just a sham."—"I do not acknowledge anything of the kind. What I want to know is what Catherine has to say to all this." Catherine drew herself up with spirit and said: "I certainly do not intend to live on charity. I don't understand what Jamie is talking about and I am very angry with him, for I had no idea that we were living on our capital, but if it is a choice between him and you, then my place is by his side."—"That," said John, "is exactly what Sophia would have said."—"I think," remarked Agnes, who had not till now uttered a word, "that Jamie is perfectly right."—"Hold your tongue," snapped Tom. "I am prepared to make you an offer, now, once and for all, of three pounds a week, to be paid to Catherine."— "Come along, Catherine," said Jamie. "There is nothing more to be said." With that he took his wife by the arm and dragged her out.

Outside Catherine's spirit left her and she began to scold him:—"Whatever shall we do? How could you make such a terrible scene? I declare I thought I should have fainted. I was so ashamed. There was no need for them to know. However poor we got we need never have let them know, for you will easily find something to do if you only look. You can't go on for ever doing

nothing."—"I wish I could," said Jamie, "I would rather do nothing than work, if work means making the rich richer and the poor poorer."—"What does it matter?" said she. "There always have been rich and poor and there always will be."—"Very well," answered Jamie, "we will be neither, for I see no other way out of it. Only, it would not be fair to do that without letting them know."—"They will never forgive you," said she. —"Nor will I ever forgive them, or the Keiths or the Greigs for what they have done."—"But the children must be educated."—"At a pinch I can teach them myself. But I don't think the pinch will come, for I feel that anything is possible, now that I have broken away from all that nonsense about our being better than other people and therefore entitled to impose vile conditions on them. I can't begin my life all over again, but at least I can keep clear of the old conspiracy and fraud and do as little harm as possible."

However, when it came to working or starving he found it impossible to be altogether clear. His only opening was with the newspapers and they were inextricably tied up with what he regarded as the swindle of Thrigsby. If he maintained his extreme position and demanded perfect honesty in all his dealings then he must starve. It began to dawn on him that honesty was an intellectual attribute, only to be won by hard striving, and that it was unreasonable to expect it from men who had to work ten hours a day. It was as absurd to expect that as to insist on emotional honesty from his wife. That he had long ago abandoned. His love and hers were different. His was ecstatic and eager to prove the wonderful richness of human nature with its inexhaustible stores of feeling. To nine-tenths of his emotions Catherine was blind, so that they fell upon the air and

drifted away. They met no kindred emotions in her to which they could be wedded. Her love was steadfast, solid, asking only a genial welcome from his and, when she had that, she was satisfied. She hardly needed more than affection and had no emotional curiosity. For that reason her adventures with Mrs. Halloran had soon palled on her and she welcomed the compromise at which her husband arrived. It meant the employment of a multitude of subtle lies which hurt him, though he put up with them when he saw that no other machinery was possible. He had no reason to believe that with another woman his position would have been any better.

The compromise in his marriage helped him to accept the necessary compromise in his outward life and, when he was offered a commission to go to the Southern States to report on conditions and prospects there, he accepted it. It meant assisting the traffic in cotton, which was really a traffic in labour, but he did not see how he could prevent that by refusing. If he rejected the offer he might have to accept a worse and the prospect of travel excited him. There was, or he thought there was, a stirring of liberty in America, where men might be on the point of discovering a means of extricating themselves from the meshes in which they were caught. He was to be handsomely paid and Catherine was to have an allowance during his absence. She was glad for him to go, hoping that he might be happier for the change. Also the commission was an important one and it was well advertised by the newspaper. Jamie was forgiven by his family and Agnes called on Catherine. Agnes said:—"Tom doesn't know I'm here. He is completely baffled by Jamie, and says he has nine lives like a cat. And really it is wonderful how nothing keeps him down. I envy you, dear Catherine, for you must have a most

exciting life, though you must hate his going away. Tom has an idea that Jamie will settle in America."—"I'm sure he won't," said Catherine, "he always says that he belongs to Thrigsby and could not settle anywhere else. He has changed lately, you know. He used to carry on and rage against the place and the people."—"Dear Catherine," said Agnes, "Tom is very obstinate and in some things very foolish, but because our husbands quarrel there is no reason why we should, and I want you to promise me that if anything happens to Jamie you will let me help you."—"Thank you, Agnes," said Catherine. "As you say, there is no reason why we should quarrel about things we do not understand. There is trouble enough in the world without our making more."—"I mean," said Agnes, "that, as I have no children of my own, I don't like being denied my share in yours."—"Dear Agnes," said Catherine, and the two women kissed and made their peace.

CHAPTER XLI

A LETTER FROM LONDON

A MONTH or two before these critical events Mary had returned to England from her travels. She had made valuable acquaintances in Rome who had given her good introductions to distinguished families in London. There she was soon installed in the household of a Canon of Westminster as governess. When she heard of her loved brother's American project she wrote:

"DEAREST,—I am overjoyed. At last you are finding yourself doing work in which it is a joy to me to think of you. And your letters lately have been such a happiness to me, making me feel foolish ever to have been disappointed in you. My youthful hopes of course deserved disappointment: they were vulgar dreams of success, acclamation, of your being, somehow, a conqueror. They were on a level with my ambitions for myself—a glittering marriage, a salon, Madame de Staël. But now that I am an old maid and a very happy one, our history as it has been seems to me much more wonderful than anything I could ever imagine, and far more romantic than the most brilliant inventions. It is such fun to know that you are a perfectly ordinary person and yet that you contain the oddest dramas that ever were in the history of the world. For after all, what matters to us

all, both individually and collectively, is daily life. History is concerned with the absurd and rather theatrical doings of a few people which, after all, have never altered the fact that we do all of us live on from day to day and only want to be left alone. Things happen to us but the central fact remains. I mean that I, for instance, as an old maid do certainly enjoy my life as much as if I had married. It is another kind of life, that is all, and neither better nor worse than the other. My best friends are men, and I doubt if they would be if I were married, though then, of course, I should have other means of gaining human interests. I am quite sure that love has a thousand meanings besides the one that is usually attached to it and that that meaning attaches to it a burden greater than it can bear. It is monstrous that love should be excluded from every other relationship than the conjugal. I suffer from that exclusion here for my little pupils are simply and most cruelly denied love. Their father is an Hon. as well as a Rev. and our childhood was a paradise compared with what he thinks right for his boy and girl. He seems to wish to make stoics of them and certainly they have courage and self-reliance. 'Always tell the truth except when you are afraid' is one of his maxims, stated because the boy confessed that he was afraid of the dark. And as the boy is afraid of his father and will not admit it to himself he is growing into the most wretched kind of liar. I talk to the children about you and they love you. All their favourite stories have to do with you, and they adore some of the absurd nonsensical poems you used to write in your letters. I miss your nonsense. I wonder if it will come back to you. Perhaps your flight to America will do that for you, though you will see many tragic sights there. Somehow

I always think of you now as a tragic person, and I don't mind. I should have been heart-broken ten years ago but was too foolish then to realise that there is no tragedy without inward nobility. Somehow whatever happens to you I am always able to rejoice in you. Perhaps (awful thought) that has become a habit with me. No, no, no. I will never let it be that. I have taken you through all my experiences and you have not only survived them *all* but have quickened them for me. There! If you had never done anything else, you will have done that. Measured by results, of course, that does not look very much, for a governess, even with three languages, is an insignificant person and is not entitled to experience of any kind. I think the housemaid is in a better position than I, for at least her position is clear, while I have humiliation unmitigated. After my free life abroad you can imagine how I chafe against it. I am allowed to have nothing in common with anybody in the house but the children. I should have thought my travels would have interested the Hon. and Rev., but no; he is not interested in the Germans, or the Swiss or the Italians. The Germans eat sausages and the Italians eat macaroni: that is all he knows about them and he finds it disgusting. Rome means to him the Roman Church. He never thinks of it as a city with delightful people living in it. On the other hand he thinks of London as a place containing the Abbey and Dean's Yard. All the rest has no justifiable existence. At the same time he is an intelligent man, very simple and good and kind, so long as everything is in its place. The children are in their place, I in mine and he in his, in iron authority above us. I greet over it but, against my will, I admire it, for it is disconcertingly English. I find it hard to explain the difference. In the home of

freedom I am less free than I have ever been. In other countries the whole point of discipline is to civilise the emotions, but in England there are no emotions allowed at all. The whole point of civilisation is lost sight of altogether. Even the most charming and delightful people have no communication with each other. Their savage feelings are not tamed and controlled but crushed, and the result is a profound melancholy and a dull heaviness. Coming from happy and intelligent people to an atmosphere of religion—if a moral code is a religion—perhaps I am unjust. Perhaps, like you, I ought to admire the English character and delight in English oddity, but we Scots have been educated for generations and we can understand the Continental peoples better than these islanders. We are able to have some glimmering of the meaning of civilisation and will not attempt to live civilised lives in barbarous conditions and with barbarous aims. If we are forced to do so, as we are in our own country, we take refuge in metaphysics, or, like some whom I could name, in hypocrisy.

"There: my adventures are done, my life has taken its shape: a little black-gowned governess whom nobody heeds. I am content. Some day I shall retire and live unheeded in those Blue Mountains of ours at which we used to gaze so longingly. Little did we dream what lay beyond them! Immediately beyond lay the Greigs: farther on Thrigsby and farther still London. How different from the free open world of our imaginations! And yet, could we have imagined anything more wonderful? Would you have anything different? I suppose you would. But how? You would have people less stupid than they are? The world would be a dreadful place without its fools. You think the ugliness and cruelty of Thrigsby unnecessary. How can you tell?

You say yourself that you cannot leave the place. It must therefore have some meaning for you, even if it is only the meaning of raw energy. I may be wide of the mark but I think there is in you a strain of the hope and impulse that were felt in England in the great days of Shelley, Keats, Byron and Wordsworth. It is absurd to think that could die altogether or indeed at all. London as I see it, Thrigsby as you see it, seem to be a complete denial, but are they really anything of the kind? When I consider the children here I often think that they are more right by instinct than they will ever be again by knowledge. Now your instinctive idea was Napoleon, and you will not tolerate anything that contradicts that idea, which means, not conquest, but liberty and civilisation. A German friend of mine says, and I think he is right, that the English do not understand or desire anything but comfort and independence, which are to them indispensable adjuncts of liberty and they would rather forego liberty than them. The poor flock to the towns because they can be more comfortable and independent in them than they can be in the country: or they think they can. (I suppose it is warmer in a slum than it is in a country cottage during the winter.) In the towns they work to create comfort and independence for people like the Greigs. Incidentally they destroy all that you cherish, grace and tenderness, simple and profound feeling, in a word, liberty. But are they not also destroying ideas and habits which were inimical to liberty? And does not such a catastrophe as that which has overtaken them in your Thrigsby make them feel the inadequacy of comfort and independence? It has made you feel that, I know, and what you feel strongly will not others also feel to the extent of their capacity? If not, there must be other catastrophes until their insensibility is broken

down. Believe me, in Germany and Italy there is the same force stirring. England is an ideal to them. They mistake her independence for liberty and do not realise that she has a harder task than any of them. I have felt since I came to London that the English must know it in their hearts or they could not endure the terrible repression in which they live. They must believe in some future triumph or they could not so harshly contain themselves. It is a great riddle and the answer to it all is Napoleon—not the pinchbeck Paris gentleman, but his uncle who was something more than a man, an idea. It is active and almost articulate in you, and you care about it more than about anything else. But the English will not let it be active or articulate in their life until they have ensured their comfort and their independence. Perhaps they are right and probably they will force others to emulate them. Live abroad and you will appreciate comfort when you return home. Meanwhile one suffers. The suppression of the idea (and in the modern world there is only one idea—Liberty)—means the suppression of art and religion. It has choked the poetry that I used to hope you would one day find in yourself, with the result of making you look for poetry in life—a pure and almost abstract emotion. The amazing thing is that you have found it and that makes me very anxious to meet your wife. You have never given me a very clear idea of her except that she is beautiful. Tibby I know, Fanny Shaw I know, Sophia and Selina Leslie are admirably drawn in your letters, but Catherine is mysterious. I suppose she is and must be so to you, and it is only tiresome and old-maidish in me to want everything clear-cut and precise. Very unreasonable too, for I could not desire for you what is valuable in my own life which is quite easily

pared down to two relationships, with you and with one other. Everything else seems vain and pretentious, unreal, shadowy, easily forgotten. But nothing connected with those two relationships can be forgotten. They live in me and I in them and I would not change place or times with anyone, not even to be Helen of Troy or Cleopatra. No romance was ever more exciting than my quiet little existence and I think getting out of bed in the morning as great an adventure as the discovery of America. In the first place it means seeing the light of day again and in the second it means letters. A real letter is a revelation, a communication from the unknown. Think what your letters have been to me, the letters you wrote to me in Rome when I was so unhappy. I was able to live in the life of the family, to share with you the torment of the process of disintegration, the inexplicable collapse of the fabric of its authority, the assertion of your will, setting desire above accomplishment.

"You have often envied me, comparing Thrigsby, in your droll way, to Noah's Ark, with the animals two by two, and myself as the dove sent out to explore the flooded face of the earth. I can only report that the flood has not subsided and now you yourself are to go out to the New World. Frankly I don't think you will discover anything different. The flood has not subsided and will not subside. How can it when there are people like you and me who care for nothing except such freedom as they can find, and find it in the simple love of the few people who are accessible to us? We may have nothing to show for it but you will hand on more to the next generation than Tom who can only bequeath his fifty or his hundred thousand pounds. Not that I despise Tom. I am very fond of him. As he figures

in your letters he is a joy for ever, the perfect incorruptible.—How I long to see them all! I arrived in London with thirty shillings and had to procure work at once. Now I must wait until one year's service entitles me to three weeks' holiday. I shall postpone it until your return from America. Then what a talk we shall have! I shall lie on my bed and you shall look out of the window and it will be as though we were back in Kirkcudbright and once more I shall struggle to cram your big thoughts into my little head. Nothing will have changed, so true is it as Shelley said of Beatrice Cenci that all we do and suffer is 'as the mask and mantle in which circumstances clothe us for our impersonation on the scene of the world.' Above all I shall be able to tell you much that I could never bring myself to write. We shall not be brother and sister then but comrades in love and mind. Good-bye, dearest Jamie. I will write to Catherine to console her in your absence."

CHAPTER XLII

MARGARET GATHERS HER FAMILY ROUND HER

LAST scene of all that ends this strange eventful history, the last gathering of the family of the Lawries, the last assertion of its entity before it is swallowed up in the roar of the machinery which is modern England.

A week before Jamie was to set sail from Liverpool Margaret fell ill of an internal trouble which had fastened upon her many years before and had caused that obstinate abstraction from the life about her which had culminated in her withdrawal from Thrigsby. She knew that she was brought face to face with death, and, as in the case of her husband, she wrestled with it fiercely. She was not prepared to die thinking herself unworthy to go before the Judgment Seat. Her days had been embittered by Jamie's repudiation of his brothers. He had failed, she thought: he had renounced his trust. In her heart she hated Catherine who had ensnared Jamie with her beauty, a terrible culmination to all his wildness. She thought of Catherine as an Englishwoman and she despised the English as a people who compromised in their religion, a wanton and a light people given to pleasure. They had claimed and seduced her eldest son and she thought of the women of Thrigsby as those ladies in the Bible who made a tinkling with their feet and were threatened with scabs.—As she lay in her

bed Margaret gathered herself up into one violent impulse of hatred. She conjured up a vile and wicked word, assumed responsibility for it and struggled with it mosaically. She totted up a list of the Commandments Jamie had broken and, to include the seventh, called his marriage adulterous. It was, at any rate, voluptuous and should be included. She descended into the very pit of misery in this last furious attempt to break down the iron discipline she had imposed on herself, and the limitations she had set to ensure her serenity. The sweet religious melancholy of her expression was ravaged and her eyes burned and glowered. She put forth all her extraordinary physical and moral strength to resist the cataclysm taking place within her and she became voluptuous in her misery, cherishing every fresh pang, every new wave of agony that came over her. She cheated herself in order to cheat the physician, who assured her that she would soon be well again. Time was what she wanted: time to quell the revolt and doubt in her soul. For this was no new thing. There had been such struggles all through her life, though never before had there been so terrible an issue. This was final and she knew it. All her desire was for the love of her later life, her love for Jamie, and she could not enter into him because his doings were blasphemous, and could not be contained within the walls of her religious conception of the world. Her love bade her follow him but she could not. She had always pretended that he would come back from his strange courses and be at peace with her and with God. Now she knew that her pretence had been vain and that he had sinned past redemption. She knew him as she knew none other of her children. He was more than flesh of her flesh: he was love of her love. Through him she had a terrible knowledge of the things

of the earth that surged in upon her saintly knowledge of the things of the spirit. It was her effort now to keep these two kinds of knowledge apart. She desired to be prepared to meet her Maker, but with this hunger for her love and to live in it she knew herself to be unready. Yet she could not keep her love contained. It was passionately concentrated upon Jamie. It knew his love for Tibby, Tibby's for him and it was kindled by it, reaching to a white heat that burned through all his history, coming at last to his marriage and drowning it with flame until there was nothing left but charred embers. Against the idea of Catherine Margaret hurled herself as against the vilest evil. There, there was the destruction of her love and she would not have it. If her love was destroyed she could never make her peace with God. All her life she had kept it pure and it had been a psalm of praise. But now its virtue was gone out from her and for the lack of it she ached. There were times when she believed herself to be already in hell-fire because her love had led her away from God, who to punish her had removed His grace from Jamie and sent him out into the world despoiled and exposed to temptation and the snares of beauty.

Sometimes she was exhausted and lay with slow tears trickling from her eyes, unable to move even so much as her eyelids. Tibby found her so one evening and was shocked and frightened and stayed with her until she moved. Then Tibby whispered:—"You were a long time away, mistress."—"Is there only you, Tibby?" murmured Margaret. "There were the five of them and you at the table, and now there is only you. Your father was a good friend to me, Tibby."—"And you've been a good friend to me, mistress."—"Jamie!" murmured Margaret, "Jamie!"—"Shall I send for him?" asked

Tibby.—"No! No! No! I'm very well. I'm going to get better. Jamie was a fine, handsome man."—"Aye," said Tibby.—"And there were the five of them at the table."—"Losh!" muttered Tibby, "she's light-headed!" —"I am nothing of the kind," snapped Margaret. "Whose turn is it to come this week?"—"Tom's."—"He'll talk to me about my will. I don't want to see him."—"Jamie will be gone soon to America."—Margaret began to weep. She thought of Jamie already gone with no issue to her struggle, and her love leaped within her and tortured her. Tibby, watching her, saw her throat swell, the veins in it stand out, and the skin of her face contract. Tibby was horrified and frightened at the cruelty of life throbbing through the obstinate vitality of her old mistress. She was alone in the house. Their last little maid had left them a week before Margaret's illness. She could not leave for a moment. She wrote a note to Jamie and sent it down to his house by a neighbour who was going in to Thrigsby. He came out at once prepared to stay if necessary.—"Is she dying, Tibby?"—"Aye."—"Is she happy?"—"I think she's in terror. She's been a lonely woman for so long. I never saw a creature suffer so."—"Did she ask for me?"—"She said your name."—"It was Tom she loved best."—Tibby looked at him reproachfully, and said: "She declared she would not see Tom, in such a queer funny voice I could have laughed, but that it was so sad."—"Will the end soon come?"—"I cannot tell. She's strong."

Jamie sat by his mother's bedside for hours before she spoke. He held her thin white hand in his and it took warmth from him. Strange shapeless dream-like thoughts flitted through his mind, mysterious thoughts of women, grotesque and ugly some of them, beautiful

and inspiring others. It was very slowly that these thoughts began to gather round Margaret and to give him a conception of her as a woman, even as the woman whom he had married. Then with a sudden emotion that shook him to the marrow he thought of her as the woman from whom he had his life. Turning, he found his mother's eyes upon him and he bent to her and kissed her on the lips. It was the kiss of a lover and she drew him down into the depths of her dying life, and still she held his hand in hers. No words were possible for a long time. Darkness came and the stars shone in the sky through the hurrying autumn clouds. The church bells chimed the hours. It was very snug in the little grey room, very snug and warm and time could pass it by.

"Shall I read to you, mother?"—"Yes, Jamie. Read me the story of Ruth."—He read the story of Ruth and found when he had done that she had her eyes closed.—"Are you asleep, mother?"—She made no answer but she was not asleep, she was slyly telling herself that she had fulfilled her love and that God would forgive her because she had loved much. She had taken Jamie away from Catherine and God would be pleased with her because she had conquered that much evil. Catherine, she knew, had never loved him so. Catherine had taken all for her beauty, had taken all but him, whom she had left cold and solitary.—"The Lord do so to me and more also, if ought but death part thee and me."—Margaret hugged the thought that she had the love of her first-born. It was the whole world to her and she would not renounce it though she knew she was about to die and must go out of the world naked as when she came into it. It might mean damnation and the loss of her immortal soul but she would suffer that for this last pas-

sion. All her beliefs became pictorial, a matter of golden crowns and white singing angels, and when she came near sleep then all the place where she lay was filled with the glitter of gold and the song of the angels. But she would not let herself sleep, for she thought she might never wake up again and she wanted her love till the end. This was the fiercest conflict. All her life she had fought for Heaven against love. Now she found herself wrestling with all her might for love against Heaven and never had she been so strong, never so entirely absorbed in her will. Her old terror had been of the future: now she was afraid when she looked back and saw the procession of empty loveless days streaming away from her. The past was appallingly actual to her and it seemed that she must live in it. The spent days moving away seemed to drag her in their wake, down from the heaven of her love. The whole careful structure of her life seemed to crumble, to crack, to be about to come crashing down. Her thoughts rushed hither and thither, patching here and propping there.—"Now, now, it is coming," she told herself, thrilled with horror, "and I shall be destroyed."

There were times when her mental life ceased altogether and she was absorbed in the physical struggle to retain her vitality. Then she would lie, apparently in a swoon, but in reality crouching and wary, practising an instinctive and most subtle economy of her forces. Victory in that region was easy and had little sweetness. Always when she felt that she had won the mastery she would come back to the greater conflict to preserve her love from death and from the past. She would go back over the whole of her life measuring the right and wrong, but she had no standard wherewith to measure. She could not be interested in any of her

life except in so far as it had touched her husband's and her son's, and therein had been neither right nor wrong. Fool that she had been not to have known that always. The days would not be spent. They would not be hurrying away from her. Her thoughts crept up into her imagination, which darted down upon the hurrying days, claiming those which had contained some love and bidding them come back to her. This was a new power and she exulted in it, for it brought a wonderful light into her love and opened up new regions in Jamie's life. She knew now whither he had retired when he had seemed lost to her and she knew that she should have followed him and not have expected him to stay with her in the dreamy, quiet, prosperous days where love was not. She saw herself suddenly going down with him into the strong-room of the bank among the bags of gold and she remembered how awed and impressed she had been and how he had smiled at her. Then she was in such pain that she broke into a dry cackle of bitter laughter. At once Jamie was kneeling by her bedside and held her in his arms to soothe her. She raised her hand and ran her fingers through his hair.—"Grey hair you're getting, Jamie, and white hairs in your beard."—"Yes, mother, but I'm still a child in your arms."—She gave a little crooning cry of pleasure at that.—"Don't let me go, Jamie, not yet. I could never let you go, Jamie. All the others went, but I could never let you go."—"No, mother."—"Are you angry with me because I couldn't let you go?"—"O! no, no, no."—"I wanted you to be a minister, Jamie, but I couldn't, because of your wicked rages. I wanted to give one son to God."—"If God is love then the gift is in the loving."—"You wouldn't have liked to be a minister?"—"No, mother."—"The Bible never had its true meaning for you."—

"Not here, mother, not in the kind of life we have to live. The world has changed for us, though it never changed for you."—"How is it changed?" she asked almost peevishly.—"It has become so evil that we need a greater love and a greater God, more affirmation and less denial, more Thou Shalt and less Thou Shalt Not."—"I don't understand. There is nothing at all now but you, Jamie."—"I shall not leave you."

She sighed and closed her eyes and went back to her struggle. He began instinctively to understand what was happening to her. She was dying and seeking to triumph over death: she was claiming his love, to be as a little child in his arms. Death had been her enemy. Death had taken her man and condemned her to solitary days and years. And she had accepted the sentence of death until now, when she could suffer it no more.

From that hour he never left her for a moment but sat absorbed in the effort to live in the little passionate remnant of her life. All that was worthless and trivial in his own being fell away from him and he too was charged with passion seeking that joy which is the human flower of immortality. Life has no power to destroy it, death cannot wither it, for it is itself life and death, the very impulse of immortal beauty wherein all things have their being. In these hours of travail Jamie's imagination won a new freedom and he set the crown upon the fabric of the philosophy which was as necessary to him as air or light. Gone for ever was the idea of a God who had created a rigid system and pronounced it good. Gone was the small idea of love which confines it to the relation of a man and a woman and excludes all else. Gone was the notion of a Fall and a slow and far-distant redemption; gone the myth of the salvation in Christ, except in so far as Christ stood for human joy

through love; gone the separation of good and evil. That only is good which unites and creates: that only is evil which separates and destroys, and good and evil are both necessary. Gone was the idea of external authority, gone his respect for everything in the world that had been created in its image, for power won by intrigue and bargaining and hoarded riches. He was no longer a prisoner in the walls built by men in their worship of their false Godhead of power. He was free and open to joy and love.

Little by little he won Margaret's absolute trust and confidence. It was the strangest wooing. She loved to lie in his arms and they would talk of his father and of the old days in Scotland, and he would tell her of his love for his children and of all his hopes for them and of the great change that was come into the world and the new freedom that future generations would create for themselves. She could not always follow him but it was enough for her that he was opening up his mind to her and into his thoughts she could pour her profoundly religious feeling.

The struggle was over. She lived in love.

During the evening before she died she bade him call Tibby, and charged him to take care of her all her life. She thanked Tibby for all her kindness and goodness and asked her to take Jamie's hand and to promise that she would never leave him. With tears in her eyes Tibby promised that she would serve him faithfully all her days, him and his children. She seemed to insist on the word "serve" though her eyes belied it and promised him a deeper devotion.

When she had gone Margaret said: "Tibby is a good woman. I have learned much from her."—"I too," said Jamie. Then he felt that the end was near, and he

became in spirit as he was when, as a little boy, he used to clamber on her bed and boast and try to make her laugh. He sat at the end of her bed and talked wild nonsense at which she smiled happily, and until the smile faded from her lips he kept it up. Then he was silent, and sat gazing at her. A puzzled expression came into her face, her lips moved and she said:—"Love—love and God?" and she just stirred her head as though to say that there was no answer. After that she sank back into a torpor and the spirit passed out of her face and it became as a mask. She lay so for hours. Jamie knew she would never wake again. The body seemed unimportant. It had given up its essence. He did not need to stay by its side.

For the first time during three days he went out and walked back to Thrigsby. He approached it by way of a high hill, surmounting which he came suddenly in view of the sprawling town with its chimneys, steeples, domes and towers. Its careless ugliness moved him profoundly. He had lost all resentment for the ruin that had come upon him in its chaos. If it destroyed, its energy would make good. "Comfort and independence." If that was what they were after, they would soon weary of it. They would soon be surfeited.

It was comfortable and beautiful to return to Catherine and the children. Here was another kind of love, good, pleasant, and jolly: love captured and shaped and released from its agony. He was free of all trace of impatience with Catherine and astonished her with his gentle tenderness. He told her that his mother was dying and she said: "She was a saint if there ever was one."—"It is her wish," said Jamie, "almost her last, that Tibby should come and live with us."—"I shall be

very glad," replied Catherine, "for she is so good with the children."

When Jamie returned to his mother's house he found Mary there, wee Mary, a strange little dry figure in black with a face too old for her years and lit up by mischievous grey eyes.—"I came at once," she said. "I am glad I am in time."—"She won't know you."—"No. But I was fond of her and admired her and it would have seemed cruelly wrong to come after all these years, only to find her dead. I actually prayed in the train that she might be alive. Tibby says you were with her to the last and that she was very happy. She looks so." Jamie bade her be silent. There was yet life in the body and he thought that Margaret might still be aware of them though she could give no sign. The doctor had said she might live for hours in that coma. If that was living, what was death? And what died? Margaret had never been so living to him. He seemed to possess all her life, to be absolved from the divisions that had separated them. Death might have the still white body. That which had stirred in it, the desire and the will, remained. He felt wonderfully happy and not at all sad. Grief he had none. Death also was a fulfilment. Nothing in him was shocked, nothing repelled.—"Would it be different," he suddenly asked himself, "if it were I who was dying? How could it be different? She was better than I, a stronger and a nobler spirit. There is nothing in my life that I value more than her. There is nothing that I value for its own sake. If it were I it could not be different."—"What are you thinking, Jamie?" asked Mary. He told her, and she pursed up her lips.—"I am afraid," she said, "because I know that it must some day be I."—"It is nothing," he muttered.—"That," replied Mary, "is what is so terrible."—"I mean,

it ends nothing. It is only a moment in being, which has no end."—"Is that what you believe?"—"Yes."—"I couldn't. I want some compensation."—"Compensation for the wonder of living?"—"No, for failure in it."—"Surely then, death is compensation enough."—"I wish she would speak or make some sign."—"She is dead," said Jamie, for even as his sister spoke he knew that it was so.

Mary knelt by the bedside and Jamie stood towering above her. Suddenly Mary broke into sobs and he caught her up in his arms and carried her away. On the stairs he met the old woman who had been called in to make all decent for the dead.

Downstairs Mary controlled herself and she clung to Jamie and said: "What I mind so fearfully is that something has gone with her that I never knew."—"And I," he said, "never knew it till last night. All those years it was denied and crushed, sacrificed wickedly to unworthy things. That—that is why I hate the world as we have made it. The true loveliness of every one of us is denied."—Mary's tears rained down. She clung to her brother and implored him never to let her go, never to keep his love from her.

There came a sharp rat-tat at the door. It was Tom. Tibby admitted him and showed him into the room.—"I consider," he said, "that I ought to have been informed of this days ago."—"Everything was done," answered Jamie, "in accordance with her wishes."—"At least," said Tom, "I claim the right to take charge of the arrangements."—"Certainly." Tom grunted and went upstairs.

"Is that," asked Mary, "what Thrigsby has made of Tom?"—"To-morrow," replied Jamie, "I will show you what Tom has made of Thrigsby. He is a maker of

modern England and he is proud of it."—"But he was fond of her."—"He will grieve more than any of us."—"He is terrible," said Mary.

All three brothers and the two sisters were present at the funeral which Tom had arranged perfectly, even to wine for the lawyers and the epitaph for his mother's grave:

HERE LIES

MARGARET KEITH LAWRIE

The beloved wife of THOMAS LAWRIE, A.M. (Edin.)
of Carsphairn N.B.

She . had . no . thought . but . for . her . children
No . ambition . but . for . her . sons
She . lived . to . serve . Almighty . God
And . did . good . works
She . died . in . the . love . of . Jesus . Christ
A . sainted . woman
A . mother . blessed . in . the . love
Of . her . children.

The wings of angels touched above her head,
And from her life was evil banishèd.

Margaret had managed to save two thousand pounds out of her small income, and this hoard except for fifty pounds she left to her grandchildren.—"Good," said John, when the will was read. Tom was flushed and sulky:—"At least," he said, "the expenses of the funeral should be borne by the estate."—"Not at all," replied John. "I think it should be borne by us three equally."

Then began a squabble into which Jamie was not to be drawn. He was thinking of the body of his mother being lowered into the ground. With her, it seemed to him, went all that had bound them together. What had he to do with hard, angry Tom, slighted because

his childlessness debarred him from participation in his mother's estate? John and Maggie from their sojourn in the South of England were already foreigners. They had adopted other manners, almost another speech. Only Mary was left and it seemed that the family was buried with Margaret. Already the lustre was gone from the Keiths and the Greigs and the name of Lawrie could cast no spell, for where was their achievement? They had exploited the fag end of a tradition. Tom and John were rich, but to what end? Their riches served no purpose: they enslaved many and freed none.—"We are as separate," said Jamie to Mary, "as though we were at the ends of the earth. We have worshipped and served a thing that had no being, a thing that could be dropped into a hole in the earth."—"Not I," said Mary. —"Even you, for you expected wonders from me merely because I was a Lawrie and the eldest of them. But I am a poor man and a failure and glad to be so."—"What *are* you talking about?" asked Mary.—"The donkey's hind leg," replied Jamie with a great laugh, "for we have already talked it off. Dear old Tom is a joy for ever and we have been very unjust to him."

Mary's Hon. and Rev. had allowed her only three days as ample time in which to bury her mother. She had therefore to return after a vain attempt to make friends with Catherine who distrusted her and disapproved of her ease and intelligence. It was no good. Jamie could not help at all for life for him had stopped momentarily. His mother's death had chilled him and removed him from the conduct of ordinary life. It was nothing to him that Catherine and Mary could not understand each other. Mutual understanding seemed to him so rare and high mystery that it was not to be looked for in common life. Why should Catherine and Mary com-

prehend each other? They shared no purpose. Mary's life was in the minds of intellectual men. She was a puzzle even to himself. Catherine's pleasure lay in simple household things, and she was a puzzle to him also.—Everything was a puzzle to him for the change in him, the consummation of so many dreams and hopes, was so sudden and violent that he looked for everything else to be changed also. And when he looked, nothing was changed. Catherine was as she always was, and he could swear that wee Mary had not altered by a line or a thought since she used to do his school tasks for him. "A born governess," he said, and was pleased at hitting her off with a phrase.

It was only when Tibby came to the house that he began to thaw into life again, and with fresh eyes to see new beauty in Catherine and a wonder of loyalty in wee Mary. Then it seemed to him that nothing was gone from him, that his life was full indeed and fair of promise, and he took up the task of interpreting between Catherine and Mary, wifehood and spinsterhood. But here was another failure for Catherine marked his tender sympathy with Mary and his keen interest in all her thoughts and projects and was jealous.

Mary had marked the change in her brother when Tibby came to the house and her thoughts were deep. She left Thrigsby sad at heart. Jamie saw her to the station. She was to travel down with John and Maggie and, at the last moment, Tom turned up to say goodbye. The train steamed out, Mary and Maggie waved their black-edged handkerchiefs until they were out of sight. As they turned away Tom said: "John is getting quite fat. He tells me he is thinking of getting married again. I call it disgusting. O! Agnes told me to ask you to dinner before you go."—"Thanks," said

Jamie, "but I think Catherine will not be able to spare me."—"Agnes will be sorry. How long will you be away?"—"Six months. Perhaps a year."—"And then?"—"I don't know."—"I should think you might do well as a journalist. If you like I'll speak to Macalister at my club. He's editor of *The Daily Express,* you know."—Jamie whacked on the ground with his stick: "Tom!" he cried, "will you understand once and for all that I do not wish you to interfere in my affairs or even to think about them."—"As you please," said Tom.

They came to the bottom of the station slope and there they parted.

Two days later Jamie was in Liverpool, by the river where long ago he had found romance and relief from the torment of the black city, the wide river and the sea beyond, with great ships coming and going. He had not been on the water since his first coming from Scotland. Now he boarded a vessel and an hour later she was towed out of the river and soon was out on the wide sea. The land fell away and was lost. The moon came up in the west, a comical red moon with a merry face and a wisp of cloud across it for a moustache. He stood on deck with the wind blowing cold through his hair and beard and gazed up at the moon, which set him tingling with such a vague hungry longing as he had not known since he was a boy and in love with Selina Leslie. The face in the moon reminded him of Mr. Wilcox as Dogberry. The longing in him grew into passionate hope and he told himself that he was going towards the New World where there had been wars of liberty.

En Route West - in Nebraska
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